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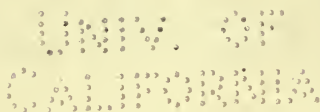
CURRENTS AND EDDIES  
IN THE  
ENGLISH ROMANTIC GENERATION



# Currents and Eddies in the English Romantic Generation

By Frederick E. Pierce, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of English in  
Yale University



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THE present volume is the sixth work published by the Yale University Press on the Henry Weldon Barnes Memorial Publication Fund. This Foundation was established June 16, 1913, by a gift made to Yale University by the late William Henry Barnes, Esq., of Philadelphia, in memory of his son, a member of the Class of 1882, Yale College, who died December 3, 1882. While a student at Yale, Henry Weldon Barnes was greatly interested in the study of literature and in the literary activities of the college of his day, contributing articles to some of the undergraduate papers and serving on the editorial board of the *Yale Record*. It had been his hope and expectation that he might in after life devote himself to literary work. His untimely death prevented the realization of his hopes; but by the establishment of the Henry Weldon Barnes Memorial Publication Fund his name will nevertheless be forever associated with the cause of scholarship and letters which he planned to serve and which he loved so well.





## PREFACE

IF literary history is exclusively the interpretation of great literature, it should confine itself to masters and masterpieces. But if it be also a lesson from past ages for our own, it must interpret those minor figures who, more than the giants, because they are more numerous and pliant, form the thought currents of the day. And if, further, history be a panorama of the human drama called life, who would reject entirely the comedy of the vain poetaster or the tragedy of the broken minor who was, the great poet who might have been? We make no pretence of having allotted space to each author in exact proportion to his literary merits, and we know that we have mentioned several people whom it is better to read about than to read. But it was only by this means, we thought, that we could present a brilliant transitional age in its habit as it lived. If we have said more about the environment of poets than about the magic qualities of their verse, it is because the latter task has already been so well done by Professor Beers, Professor Elton, Mr. Arthur Symons, and others. May this book throw a little light on those ill-understood forces at work in life, some for the encouragement—too many for the destruction—of incipient poetry.

F. E. P.

August, 1918.



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## INTRODUCTION

BETWEEN 1795 and 1820 there was among German authors an easily traceable movement, known as that of the *Romantische Schule*. It had a definite propaganda, a definite body of contemporary enemies, created a definite type of literature; and in spite of rather undignified civil strife among its different camps during the period of decline, it had in general a social unity and organization like that of a political party. Still more was this true of the romantic movement in France between 1820 and 1840. There Victor Hugo organized and rallied his literary followers like a political leader; and the militant romanticist cried: "He who is not for me is against me." The line of demarcation between romanticist and classicist was clearly drawn, and the main unquestioned line of cleavage.

Some of the same forces which produced these movements on the continent were at work in England. Yet the resulting phenomena were different. The Anglo-Saxon mind is in many ways centrifugal where French or German tendencies are centripetal. In a matter like literature, where there is no great external danger to repress its natural inclination, it does not lend itself readily to a nation-wide, homogeneous reform; and for this reason one finds in England a romantic generation, a gradual evolution in taste; but no one dominant romantic movement. Instead there were a series of minor impulses or camps, often hostile to each other, all presenting certain elements which critics have called "romantic" mixed with others which are doubtfully so. As a result, no matter what definition of romanticism be adopted, it is impossible to make the cleavage between romantic and unromantic poetry coincide with the line of division created by social affiliations or by conflicting theories of literary art. Would not every one call the "Christabel" of Coleridge and the "Giaour" of Byron romantic? Yet Coleridge and Byron



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belonged to different literary camps, at times condemned each other's poetry, and preached different critical theories. Keats was a romantic poet; yet the most savage review that he ever received appeared in *Blackwood's*, a magazine favorable to romantic criticism and well filled with romantic fiction.

Hence, gentle reader—and ungentle reviewer—we endeavor to drop, as far as possible, the words “romanticism” and “classicism” and to study the phenomena of the so-called romantic generation as those of an age marked by great variations in taste and by varying tendencies in creative work. The words “romanticism” and “romantic school” were often used by French and German writers of the early nineteenth century to describe their own literatures, and by English writers describing continental authors; but—and this is significant—those terms were rarely employed by Englishmen of that period describing any one social circle among their own contemporary writers. They constantly spoke of landscapes as romantic, often of some book as a romantic work, but almost never of any group of writers as “the romantic group.” Instead of *Die Romantiker* or *Les romantiques* Englishmen referred to “The Lake Poets,” “The Scotch Poets,” “The Cockney Group,” “The Suburban Group,” and “The New School of Poetry.” Such labeling, however inaccurate in details, recognized the central fact that English poetry was being shaped, not by one movement, but by several; and that, even when a common thread of romanticism can be traced across them, it lies tangent to a number of circles, not coincident with any one. Is it not, then, desirable to resurrect the attitude of the romantic generation toward itself, to trace these different minor movements, to point out the lines of division between them with such differences as existed in the character of their poetry, and to explain these differences, as far as seems reasonable, by the effect of social and geographical environment, of racial instincts, and of other forming influences? If such a procedure jars on any one as too scientific, too contrary to the subjective workings of the poetic temperament, we can only answer in the words of the most purely lyric mind of the nineteenth century. “Poets,” wrote Shelley, “the best of them, are a very cameleonic race; they take the colour not only of what they feed on, but of the



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very leaves under which they pass." Byron must have believed the same when he wrote:

And as the soil is, so the heart of man.

Our interest lies mainly in the years between 1790 and 1830; but a brief glance at literary tendencies in the preceding century is a necessary preliminary. The school of Pope, which monopolized English poetry before 1720 and was probably the most powerful single influence for nearly a century after that date, was essentially urban, like the French neo-classicism from which it derived and which had originated in Paris, the most cosmopolitan city of Europe. It is true that the Augustan couplet became a social fad, and as such produced occasional fifth-rate poetasters in Highland wilds or western colonies; but the Pope imitators rarely achieved even third-rate excellence except around London. They had little to do with either the rural districts or the smaller provincial cities. The Pope tradition, though it overawed all Great Britain for a century and a half, was essentially a London tradition, elsewhere a theory much revered and little or clumsily practiced, in the great metropolis a living force even eighty years after the death of its founder. Edinburgh, though it had many critical advocates for Pope, produced little good poetry in his vein. Of the eighteenth-century poems in J. G. Wilson's "Poets and Poetry of Scotland," only a small minority are in the couplet. Blank verse, ballad metre, and Spenserian stanza predominate. Even of the work in Pope's metre given there, much is unlike him in spirit and manner; he can claim, at best, only a superficial connection with the homely cottage atmosphere of Ramsay or the ocean breezes and adventures of Falconer.

The varied human background must be remembered in studying literary currents of the eighteenth century. Before 1740 practically all "romantic" or un-Popean verse of merit came either from the wild landscapes of Scotland, which Wordsworth called, "not excepting the Alps, the most poetical country I ever traveled through," or from the Celtic blood of Wales and Ireland. Parnell was an Irishman, in whose "Fairy Tale" and "Night Piece on Death" the Celtic temperament shook its neo-classic dykes. Dyer, whose "Grongar

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Hill" is so unlike Pope's pallid pentameter pastorals, was Welsh, and James Thomson a Scotch country boy, raised amid the scenery that later encouraged the Waverley novels. His "Seasons," though written in England, is redolent of the north. Blair, author of "The Grave," a poem in which heavy didacticism and fitful bursts of uncannily suggestive poetry are strangely mingled, was a Scotch clergyman.

Even after 1740 the new types of poetry flourished best north of the Tweed. Beattie, whose "Minstrel" first made the sentimental-medieval poem popular, was the countryman of Thomson; and Macpherson, author of those Ossianic adaptations which leavened the literatures of all western Europe, was a Gaelic Highlander. John Home—whose medieval "Douglas," with its romantic lost heir, held the stage for over half a century—was Scotch. The folk poetry which Thomas Percy edited in his epoch-making "Reliques" came chiefly from the border region between Yorkshire and Edinburgh. It was the northern kingdom that crowned all by producing Burns with the wild witchery of "Tam O'Shanter" and the rollicking realism of "The Jolly Beggars." What "unclassical" poetry was produced in England before 1780 was largely a by-product of scholarly thought in the great universities; Oxford contributing the medieval poems of Thomas Warton, and Cambridge the Welsh and Scandinavian translations of Gray. Collins, Cowper, and Chatterton, though English, were not London men by birth, literary training, or inspiration; their brief residences in the great metropolis brought to the first two bitterness and disillusion—to the last tragedy. "I live here almost at a distance of sixty miles from London, which I have not visited these eight-and-twenty years, and probably never shall again," wrote Cowper in the height of his literary fame. Blake's body, it is true, was in the metropolis but his soul in "eternity." Up to the very end of the eighteenth century, medievalism, lyric passion, and poetical nature worship belonged to the outlying regions. Meanwhile in London Johnson, Goldsmith, and Churchill kept the old tradition of pentameter couplet, moralizing, and satire, unbroken. There would be a reasonable amount of truth—though not scientific accuracy of statement—in comparing the Pope School to a literary invasion from France, which conquered much the same

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ground as Agricola and his Romans, then was gradually pushed backward from the north and west, but held firmly in its fortress by the Thames almost until Tennyson's day.

It was the natural outcome of eighteenth-century tendencies that the beginnings of the great nineteenth-century poetry appeared on the very outskirts of England proper, on the Scotch border, in the neighboring Lake region, on the Bristol in the west at the edge of Wales. Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey wrote on a literary frontier. Not only did it mark the limit where Pope's influence among creative geniuses had always grown weak, but it marked also the division between a country peopled almost wholly by Anglo-Saxons and outlying districts with a strong infusion of Celtic or Scandinavian blood. Scott led an incursion from the rugged and martial north in the track of Thomson, Beattie, Home, and Macpherson; Coleridge one from the mystery-haunted west of the Celt in the steps of Parnell, Dyer, and Chatterton. Before discussing the early writing of these great innovators, however, it will be necessary to review other works of their time, much inferior in merit, but far more in the public eye during the year of our Lord eighteen hundred.





PART I

ENGLISH LITERATURE DURING THE FRENCH  
REVOLUTION AND THE CAREER OF  
NAPOLEON, 1789-1815



## CHAPTER I

### *Popular Taste and Tendencies, 1789-1804*

#### I

SHARP and dramatic is the distinction between literary movements in the creative work of genius and literary movements in popular taste. In both fields changes are forever going on; sometimes along parallel lines, as when Lamartine's richly lyrical "Méditations Poétiques" sold forty thousand copies in France in ten years; sometimes along lines woefully divergent, as when Shelley's noble lyrics were overlooked by a world eager for the sugared trash of Letitia Landon; sometimes of two simultaneous great creative movements one coincides with the new wave of popular feeling and the other not, as when Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel" became a best seller while Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality" obtained from his audience nothing but "a sleep and a forgetting." Popular movements, unlike creative ones, seldom have an artistic interest, but they have a pronounced psychological one; literary history as an interpretation of great masterpieces ignores them, but literary history as a study of the human mind learns from them how man, proud man, tricked out in a little brief applause,

Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven,  
As make the angels weep.

The initial work of the first great nineteenth-century poets only in a slight degree represented the prevailing taste of the time or appealed to it. To learn what books the general public liked during those eventful years from 1790 to 1804 we must open volumes long since thick with the dust of oblivion.

Of popular poetry heralding the new age, very little appeared for



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the first time between 1790 and 1800, but several such poems, first launched in the preceding decade, were going from edition to edition, and molding the general taste. The sonnet, which had been revived by Warton, became a best seller in the hands of Mrs. Charlotte Smith, whose little fourteen-line sheaves of lacrimosity ran through nine editions between 1784 and 1800. An illustrated edition the year before the "Lyrical Ballads" numbered among its subscribers the archbishop of Canterbury, Cowper, Charles James Fox, Horace Walpole, Mrs. Siddons, and both the Wartons. Mrs. Smith led a hard and industrious life. She brought into the world twelve children and a somewhat larger number of novels, both types of offspring being now equally dead. In her sonnets a few drops of genuine poetry are lost in a bath of tears. What she said of Solitude the reader would like to say of her:

Amidst thy wild-woods, and untrodden glades,  
No sounds but those of melancholy move;  
And the low winds that die among thy shades,  
Seem like soft Pity's sighs for hopeless love!

In 1789 another disciple of Warton, William Bowles, first printed sonnets that ran to five editions in six years, and exercised a marked influence on the young authors afterwards known as "the Lake Poets." His effusions are much better than those of Charlotte Smith; but we question whether the general public realized that. It found in both the same wind sighing through the withered leaves, the same mellow pentameter sighing through withered hopes; and it bought and praised, and asked nothing further. In fact, though Bowles is more genuine and musical, he seems at times like an echo of his sister in popularity:

There is strange music in the stirring wind,  
When lowers the autumnal eve, and all alone  
To the dark wood's cold covert thou art gone,  
Whose ancient trees on the rough slope reclined  
Rock, and at times scatter their tresses sear.

"Charlotte Smith and Bowles are they who first made the sonnet popular among the present English." So wrote Coleridge in 1797 in

the Introduction to his own imitations of Bowles. It is something to see a nation reawakened to the value of a noble verse form, even if inadequately handled.

During the same period one truly great poem was widely popular, Cowper's "Task." Originally printed in 1785, it was running through edition after edition during the last decade of the century, and is said to have netted the publisher some £10,000. Within six years an American edition appeared in New York. It is a strange thing amid all the fictitious woes of that tearful period that so wholesome and calm a poem should come from the greatest sufferer of the age; stranger yet that the public which liked Charlotte Smith and Hayley liked even better this revelation of the divine in humble life. William Gilpin in pamphlet after pamphlet was preaching the beauty of natural scenery; Methodism was spreading and increasing the religious emotion to which Cowper so powerfully though unostentatiously appealed; and "The Task" met these new needs without jarring on the old conventions. Charlotte Smith in 1793 published a very bad imitation of it, and in her Preface waxed enthusiastic over the hour "when, in the Parliament of England, the greatest Orator of our time quoted the sublimest of our Poets—when the eloquence of Fox did justice to the genius of Cowper."

The division between popular and unpopular poetry did not at all run parallel to the division between "romantic" and "neo-classical" verse. While Cowper was on every tongue, the wild, splendid lyrics of William Blake were falling from his improvised press utterly unheeded. While the medieval picturesque was everywhere welcomed in Bowles, the medieval poems of Chatterton, according to Coleridge, "were never popular. . . . The sale was *never* very great." Burns was having a decided vogue in Lowland Scotland, but no such national success as the author of "The Task." The neo-classical early poems of Cowper fell dead, while those of lesser contemporaries sold everywhere. What the public demanded was the sentimental and the obvious, free from unusual language or mystic thought, with a decent pretence of respect, at least, for the old literary conventions.

## II

After 1790 far-reaching influences on poetry overflowed from two other popular currents: the modified Pope tradition, and German or Gothic melodrama. The Pope tradition, which ran lucid and sparkling in earlier years, grew turbid and tear-stained now; but it kept the time-hallowed couplet, it was either moralizing or satirical; and, whatever Pope himself would have thought, authors and readers alike believed that it was modeled on him.

In the south of England William Hayley, the friend of Cowper and well-meaning but very patronizing patron of Blake, between 1775 and 1785 produced a series of poems in this vein. Despite hollow echoes of new influences, there is no question about his conscious discipleship in following the author of "The Dunciad," whom he sees

*tho' formed to fill the epic throne,  
Decline the sceptre of that wide domain,  
To bear a Lictor's rod in Satire's train.*

A modern ear can scarcely endure these didactic couplets, chiming on drearily about painting, epic poetry, married life, and the joys of a placid disposition; yet they gave the author a decided vogue for some years at the very time when Wordsworth and Coleridge were beginning to write. Hayley's best-known poem, "The Triumphs of Temper," published in 1781, had reached a twelfth edition by 1803. "His observation of the various effects of spleen on the female character, induced him to believe that he might render an important service to social life, if his poetry could induce his young and fair readers to cultivate the gentle qualities of the heart, and maintain a constant flow of good humor. With this view he composed his 'Triumphs of Temper,' and the success of it appears to have been fully equal to his most sanguine expectations. He has been heard to declare, that the sweetest reward he ever received as an author, was a cordial declaration from a very good and sensible mother of a large family, that she was truly indebted to the work in question, for an absolute and delightful reformation in the conduct and character of her eldest daughter." Hayley was a powerful,



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hard-riding athlete, utterly unlike his verse, which was obviously the result of a convention, not a conviction. "He had his day, too, poor man," was Mary Mitford's comment in 1811. "But the wonder with him is, not that he was dethroned, but that he was ever elevated to the high seat of poesy."

Meanwhile in central England the altar of Pope burned brightly for the literary coterie at Lichfield: Thomas Day, the author of "Sandford and Merton," Anna Seward, the Swan of Lichfield, Erasmus Darwin, and their friends. One year after "The Triumphs of Temper" appeared "Louisa: a Poetical Novel," by Anna Seward. It exhibited a mawkish sentimentality that the author of "The Dunciad" would have loathed and lashed, yet resulted, according to the authoress, "from an idea of it being possible to unite the impassioned fondness of Pope's 'Eloisa' with the chaster tenderness of Prior's 'Emma.'"

Now glooms on the stain'd page the barbarous Truth,  
And blights each blooming promise of my youth!  
EUGENIO *married!*—Anguish, and Despair,  
In ev'ry pompous killing letter glare!

Yet this precious stuff ran through five editions in a decade, the last appearing shortly before Wordsworth's "Evening Walk"; and Southey tells us that in 1796 the Swan of Lichfield was "in high reputation." Even in 1807 she quoted with apparent approval the astounding dictum of Thomas Day, "that Pope's Homer was, as poetry, very superior to its original."

Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of the famed expounder of evolution, had a far more commanding intellect than Hayley, but was hardly a better poet. Being an enthusiastic scientist, he personified flowers and other natural forces and told the story of their fancied loves with ponderous gambols of his great but unpoetical mind like the mirth-provoking antics of Milton's elephant. In metre and didacticism he was of the school of Pope; but that sane and tasteful genius would have shuddered to own his child. It was thus that Darwin painted amours between vegetables in his "Loves of The Plants" (1789):

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With charms despotic fair Chondrilla reigns  
O'er the soft hearts of five fraternal swains;  
If sighs the changeful nymph, alike they mourn;  
And, if she smiles, with rival raptures burn.

In him "poetic diction," reinforced by grandiose and technical scientific expressions, becomes a purulent disease, which must have gone far in drawing from Wordsworth those famous Prefaces a decade later.

Ere Time began, from flaming Chaos hurl'd  
Rose the bright spheres which form the circling world;  
Earths from each sun with quick explosions burst,  
And second planets issued from the first.  
Then, whilst the sea at their coeval birth,  
Surge over surge, involv'd the shoreless earth;  
Nurs'd by warm sun-beams in primeval caves  
Organic life began beneath the waves.  
First heat from chemic dissolution springs,  
And gives to matter its eccentric wings;  
With strong repulsion parts the exploding mass,  
Melts into lymph or kindles into gas.

Darwin's poems had no such sale as those of Hayley and others to be mentioned later—though they sold much better than "Lyrical Ballads"—but they were widely known and discussed. Ten years after the first of them appeared, literary men considered it an honor to the young poet Campbell to call him "the Erasmus Darwin of Edinburgh." Horace Walpole found in them "twelve verses" which he thought "the most sublime passages in any author, or in any of the few languages with which I am acquainted." With different feelings toward the popular favorite, William Taylor in 1796 warned Scott that "this age leans too much to the Darwin style."

While Hayley, Seward, and Darwin were being humorous in an attempt to be serious, intentional wit in what seemed at least the same literary channel was carrying the market by storm. "The Roliad," published 1784 and afterwards, and not in complete form until 1795, exhausted twenty-one editions before the end of the century. This work is at once a burlesque of the bad Pope imitations, and an

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example of the good ones. It is a long, mock-heroic criticism in prose of an imaginary epic, "The Rolliad," in heroic couplets. Plentiful extracts from the supposed poem are quoted, none of them with Pope's stylistic finish, but many delicious take-offs, others full of pungent satire, as in the lines on George Selwyn.

A plenteous magazine of retail wit  
Vamp'd up at leisure for some future hit;  
Cut for supposed occasions, like the trade,  
Where old new things for every shape are made.

The opening passage is typical of the whole work. "Nothing can be more consonant to the advice of Horace and Aristotle, than the conduct of our author throughout this poem. . . . The poem opens with a most labored and masterly description of a storm. Rollo's state of mind in this arduous situation is finely painted:

Now Rollo storms more loudly than the wind,  
Now doubts and black despair perplex his mind;  
Hopeless to see his vessel safely harbored,  
He hardly knows his starboard from his larboard.

That a hero in distress should not know his right hand from his left, is most natural and affecting."

Between 1794 and 1797 there was published in installments an anonymous poem called "The Pursuits of Literature." It was the work of a T. J. Mathias, and may, says Professor Courthope, "be taken as a faithful mirror of the dominant literary taste of English Society during the war with revolutionary France." That the mantle of Pope had fallen upon its author—and proved something of a misfit—is proved by such lines as the following:

Still be your knowledge temperate and discreet,  
Though not as Jones sublime, as Bryant great,  
Prepared to prove, in Senate or the Hall,  
That States by learning rise, by learning fall.

Thirteen editions of this poem were devoured by the public in eleven years; and De Quincey long afterward spoke of it as "a celebrated satire, much read in my youth." A few months after the publication of "Lyrical Ballads" appeared "The Shade of Alexander Pope on



the Banks of the Thames," "by the author of 'The Pursuits of Literature,' " which attained the honor of a third edition in one year, while "Tintern Abbey" and "The Ancient Mariner" would not sell to the amount of five hundred copies. Pope's amiable ghost is represented as lamenting the good old days of Queen Anne:

Then oft with Ministers would *Genius* walk:  
Oxford and St. John loved with Swift to talk. . . .  
But in these dark, forlorn, distracted days  
[which were producing "Christabel" and the "Lucy" poems] . . .  
Few friends are found for poetry and wit.

Aided by the same popular wave, Gifford's "Baeviad" and "Maeviad" (1794 and 1795), bitter satires against the Della Cruscan poets in the manner of "The Dunciad," required an eighth edition by 1811.

The demand for Hayley and Miss Seward was, no doubt, due in large part to their cheap sentimentality, that ever salable quality in the literary market; the great vogue of "The Pursuits of Literature" was unquestionably assisted by its personal allusions; but none the less the popular success of these poems demonstrates how much the general reader around 1800 relished what he believed to be the couplet and diction of Pope.

Another excellent barometer as to the public taste is found in Robert Bloomfield's "Farmer's Boy," which sold nearly thirty thousand copies between 1800 and 1803. A plowman by early environment and half-starved tailor by trade, Bloomfield was in no position to analyze the poetic demands of his day. For once he stumbled blindly on success, and could never repeat his triumph. In his formerly well-known and now forgotten poem the four seasons wheel round, as with Thomson; and, as with Thomson, there is much first-hand observation of pastoral life, too often devitalized by ponderous diction. As he drew on Thomson for subject-matter, so he drew on the Pope imitators for verse and vocabulary; and, though at times, in a rather wooden way, he came close to the heart of nature, his vogue was the vogue of eighteenth-century materials revamped.



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Yet Plenty reigns, and from her boundless hoard,  
Though not one jelly trembles on the board,  
Supplies the feast with all that sense can crave;  
With all that made our great forefathers brave,  
Ere the cloy'd palate countless flavours try'd,  
And cooks had Nature's judgment set aside.  
With thanks to Heaven, and tales of rustic lore,  
The mansion echoes when the banquet's o'er;  
A wider circle spreads, and smiles abound,  
As quick the frothing horn performs its round;  
Care's mortal foe; that sprightly joy imparts  
To cheer the frame and elevate their hearts.

All works mentioned hitherto are now practically forgotten, and deservedly so. It remains to consider three men of more enduring reputation who first won the public ear by playing in the approved manner, though with some new notes, on the Twick'nam instrument. These men were Crabbe, Rogers, and Campbell. Crabbe published nothing between 1785 and 1807, the period now under discussion, but he was a prominent writer both before and after his long silence; and his "Village" was deservedly popular as a new literary star when Wordsworth began writing. Crabbe's work during the eighteenth century consisted of three poems, "The Library" (1781), "The Village" (1783), and "The Newspaper" (1785). The first and last of these were dried-up Pope imitations, didactic or satirical, which deservedly won little applause for their mummified charms. "The Village" is a masterpiece in its own harsh type, and, being popular from the first, became an index of the public temper. Certain critics have attempted to class Crabbe among the forerunners of the romantic "Return to Nature," as a man who, unlike the Augustan pastoral poets, wrote with his eye on the object. Whatever may be the case with his work after 1807, such a classification of his earlier verse is highly misleading. "The Library" and "The Newspaper" contain not a single allusion to external nature, nor is there anything about it in "The Village" after the first hundred lines. Readers have often drawn a wrong impression from the grim accuracy of that opening passage, which was written with purely satirical aims, to

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show the falseness of earlier pastorals, and not drawn from any spontaneous delight in either the beauty or the harshness of Nature *per se*. The rest of the poem is written in the belief that

The proper study of mankind is man,  
and examines him with the withering disillusionment of Swift.

Here, wand'ring long, amid these frowning fields,  
I sought the simple life that Nature yields;  
Rapine and Wrong and Fear usurp'd her place,  
And a bold, artful, surly, savage race,

he tells us; and he found these objects of Rousseau's enthusiasm,

only skill'd to take the finny tribe,  
The yearly dinner, or septennial bribe.

The doctor

bids the gazing throng around him fly,  
And carries fate and physic in his eye:  
A potent quack, long versed in human ills,  
Who first insults the victim whom he kills.

The rural pastor proves

A sportsman keen, he shoots through half the day,  
And, skill'd at whist, devotes the night to play.

Irregular country amours have for Crabbe none of the glamour which Burns threw around them.

Near her the swain, about to bear for life  
One certain evil, doubts 'twixt war and wife;  
But, while the falt'ring damsel takes her oath,  
Consents to wed, and so secures them both.

The popular success of "The Village" proved the still unshaken supremacy of the pure Pope tradition. The triumphs of Rogers and Campbell soon after showed the popularity of the modified Pope current, where metre and other obvious details belonged to "the good old" convention, and the subject-matter mixed Augustan moralizing with late eighteenth-century sentimentalism or touches

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of romantic interest in far countries and revolutionary efforts for liberty. These poems, like Bloomfield's "Farmer's Boy," satisfied at once the audience's conventional respect for the old and its craving for the new. Rogers's "Pleasures of Memory" appeared in 1792, and eleven editions, the last six of one thousand copies each, were struck off before 1800. *The Edinburgh Review* said of it in 1813: "It acquired a popularity, originally very great, and which has not only continued amid extraordinary fluctuations of general taste, but increased amidst a succession of formidable competitors." Over 22,000 copies of it had been put on the market by 1816, and it continued a general favorite until after Byron's death. It is easy to understand how this should be. "The Pleasures of Memory" is a piece of charming mediocrity. Its virtues are those of Esperanto or any other universal language; it expresses no deep message to any one but has some meaning for everybody. One could hardly imagine a poem, launched in the midst of contending schools and tastes, more calculated to please both God and Mammon. To the lovers of romantic medievalism, the followers of Warton, Beattie, and Hurd, the author tells how

the stern grandeur of a Gothic tower  
Awes us less deeply in its morning hour,  
Than when the shades of Time serenely fall  
On every broken arch and ivied wall.

For the sentimentalist, fresh from tear-stained novel or comedy, he has lines like the following:

All, all escaped—but ere the lover bore  
His faint and faded Julia to the shore,  
Her sense had fled! Exhausted by the storm,  
A fatal trance hung o'er her pallid form.

It was not for nothing that Madame D'Arblay described "The Pleasures of Memory" as "that most sweet poem." The poet leads the lovers of natural scenery to the Lake region of Wordsworth,

Ere the rapt youth, recoiling from the roar,  
Gazed on the tumbling tide of dread Lodore.



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The theme of his poem, un-Wordsworthian as it is in most respects, is the praise of emotion "recollected in tranquility." Its chief appeal, however, was to the still numerous admirers of neo-classicism, to men like Adam Smith, who two years before its publication had cried out to the author, "Sir, there has been but one Voltaire." The metre is more sweet than Pope's and with less twanging power, but obviously modeled on "The Essay on Man." Eighteenth-century "poetic diction" is everywhere present. The closing lines sum up the author's attitude as that of the "Age of Reason."

Lighter than air, Hope's summer visions die,  
If but a fleeting cloud obscure the sky;  
If but a beam of sober Reason play,  
Lo, Fancy's fairy frost-work melts away!  
But can the wiles of Art, the grasp of Power  
Snatch the rich relics of a well-spent hour?  
These, when the trembling spirit wings her flight,  
Pour round her path a stream of living light;  
And gild those pure and perfect realms of rest,  
Where Virtue triumphs, and her sons are blest!

In Scotland, though many critics had maintained Pope's theories with true Lowland dogmatism and microscopic versifiers had written in his couplet, he had made few disciples among the genuine sons of Apollo. Consequently there is a touch of dramatic irony in the fact that the best poem in his vein written by a Scotchman appeared in the last year of the eighteenth century. This was "The Pleasures of Hope" by Thomas Campbell, printed when he was only twenty-one, and the greatest popular success that he ever achieved. Several large editions of it were sold before the summer of 1800. "No poem had ever met with a more flattering reception," says the poet's biographer. "The author received the united congratulations of eminent theologians, lawyers, and historians. . . . It was said that the lover presented it to his mistress, the husband to his wife, the mother to her daughter, the brother to his sister; and that it was recited in public lectures, and given as a prize-volume in schools." As a boy Campbell had come under various romantic influences, including "Ossian"; but for some years before writing "The Pleasures of

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Hope" had reverted to neo-classic models. Gray, Goldsmith, and Pope were his favorite authors; and he followed the latter so slavishly in his undergraduate poem at Glasgow University, "An Essay on the Origin of Evil," that his fellows for some time called him "the Pope of Glasgow." In 1797, shortly after coming to Edinburgh, he wrote: "Horace is my favorite lyrist, ancient or modern." After the great success of his poem, he was dubbed there, "the Erasmus Darwin of Edinburgh."

"The Pleasures of Hope" is not exactly like what Pope did write, but is very much like what we might have expected from him had he lived in 1799. The metrical effect resembles closely that of "Eloisa to Abelard," which—as we are too apt to forget—is as truly Pope as "The Dunciad." The chief difference in subject-matter is Campbell's wealth of allusion to past events and distant regions, which is so great that an annotated edition of his poem would make an excellent primer in history and geography. This, however, represents a change in mental resources rather than in mental attitude. In Queen Anne's reign Clive's victory at Plassey and Washington's at Yorktown had not filled English minds with pictures of Hindu luxury and forest ambush; nor had historic and philological research unrolled before them, as in Campbell's day

her ample page  
Rich with the spoils of time.

Campbell's contemporaries believed his "Pleasures of Hope" clearly in the Pope tradition; it was in the strength of that faith that they gave it welcome; and we see no reason for quarreling with their verdict. Pope's

Lo the poor Indian, whose untutored mind  
Sees God in clouds and hears him in the wind

is not very different from Campbell's lines:

Come, bright Improvement! on the car of Time,  
And rule the spacious world from clime to clime;  
Thy handmaid arts shall every wild explore,  
Trace every wave, and culture every shore.

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On Erie's banks, where tigers steal along,  
And the dread Indian chants a dismal song,  
Where human fiends on midnight errands walk,  
And bathe in brains the murderous tomahawk—  
There shall the flocks on thymy pasture stray,  
And Shepherds dance at Summer's opening day.

Considering that Campbell wrote after the French Revolution, his sympathy with liberty and Poland is not so much more striking than Pope's lines in "The Essay on Man":

Who first taught souls enslaved, and realms undone,  
The enormous faith of many made for one?

The great vogue of modified Pope imitations at the end of the eighteenth century represented the force of a long tradition, not an organized movement, or even an instinctive sympathy, among the poets concerned. Rogers liked some of Campbell's poems but was no great admirer of "The Pleasures of Hope." Apparently also he disapproved of Crabbe. The beginning of "The Pleasures of Hope" condemns as unsatisfactory "Nature pictured too severely true," which would hardly argue enthusiasm for "The Village." It is a question whether the avidity of the public was quite as great as the sales would indicate, for when a book is fashionable the number of purchasers may exceed the number of readers. Neither were the authors involved necessarily anti-romantic. The journals of Rogers during the period show a mild love of Gothic architecture; he admired Beattie's "Minstrel"; and Anna Seward was a most enthusiastic devotee of "Ossian." But certainly literary England at the turn of the century was in no mood to welcome poetry which outspokenly decried Pope and which was aggressively unlike him in thought and style.

### III

In the field of creative poetry innovation had to encounter a hidebound traditional prejudice. In the field of prose this was not so. Prose was in the late eighteenth century a newcomer in the field of literature, a vulgar upstart with no great traditions to maintain. If



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its works fell into types and schools, their differences were only vaguely recognized; and any one felt free to read a prose work that appealed to him without incurring the charge of literary heresy. It is a question if the popularity of Macpherson's "Ossian" was not aided by the fact that, being in rhythmic prose, it shocked no metrical convention. In France the distinction was so keenly felt that romantic prose by Rousseau, St. Pierre, and Chateaubriand was widely read for nearly a lifetime before markedly romantic poetry ventured to appear at all. It was probably in part due to this prejudice that during the last decade of the eighteenth century the Gothic and medieval romance attained an astounding popularity, while the medieval poems of Tom Warton and Chatterton and the old Norse or Welsh translations of Gray were but little read.

Another and stronger reason for the vogue of the Gothic novel was the general melodramatic taste of the generation. This called into existence shortly before the turn of the century a flood of cheap melodramatic translations and adaptations from the German, which had little enough of enduring value, but which served as a gauge of the public's attitude and in various ways influenced later literature. The German melodrama and Gothic romance were closely related. Mrs. Radcliffe and M. G. Lewis, the two chief exponents of the latter type, travelled in Germany before producing some of their best-known work, and appealed to the same love of sentiment, excitement, and sham medievalism as their Teutonic contemporaries. The vogue of the two literary types was exactly synchronous, save for the fact that the demand for Mrs. Radcliffe's novels did not die out so abruptly.

From 1762 to 1790 there was a thin but unbroken line of succession in novels medieval in date and more or less unearthly in atmosphere. They dealt with underground passages, haunted chambers, lost heirs, knights who acted, not as history indicates, but as young ladies believed that they should; and all the other appurtenances of

The life that never was on sea or land.

Some of these had been popular, others not. Between 1789 and 1797, Mrs. Ann Radcliffe published a series of romances which had a



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transitory but brilliant popular success, a sale so good that she received £800 for the last one, an exceedingly high price in that day. Her "Mysteries of Udolpho," as an old lady told Thackeray, was "one of the most famous romances that ever was published in this country." To say nothing of her gushing female admirers, she was probably read by every one of the future great writers of the romantic generation. Tom Moore had perused her as early as 1796. Her influence appears repeatedly in Scott's writings, and in Byron's "Manfred" and "Lara." Shelley as a boy devoured her pages. Keats alludes to her, though without enthusiasm. When her "Udolpho" appeared, the aged and scholarly Joseph Warton sat up most of the night to finish it. Byron bracketed her with Otway, Schiller, and Shakespeare among those who had hallowed Venice for readers; and "Barry Cornwall" with Le Sage, Fielding, Richardson, and Sterne among those who "forced me to travel onwards to the Intellectual Mountains." "The mighty magician" of "Udolpho," Mathias called her; and Leigh Hunt as a child ate his cake "wiping away the crumbs as they fell upon our 'Mysteries of Udolpho.'" Now her works are like one of Ossian's ruins, where the wind sighs and the thistle grows, but no reader's foot intrudes.

Elaborate analyses of her various novels can be found elsewhere. Coleridge, "on reading a romance in Mrs. Radcliffe's style," amused himself "with making out a scheme which was to serve for all romances *a priori*, only varying the proportions. A baron, or baroness, ignorant of their birth and in some dependent situation; a castle, on a rock; a sepulchre, at some distance from the rock; deserted rooms; underground passages; pictures; a ghost, so believed; or a written record, blood in it; a wonderful cut-throat, etc." Her general atmosphere has been half humorously summed up by Leigh Hunt in two lines:

Radcliffe, fear-charmed, ever breathlessly creeping  
Through castles and corridors, frightful to sleep in.

Posterity, indifferent to her ghostly thrills, merely asks what elements in her work roused such contemporary enthusiasm. These do not include her skillfully conducted plots, which, but for offsetting

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weaknesses, would give permanent, not temporary, popularity. What the late eighteenth century welcomed in her and the mature nineteenth rejected, appear to have been chiefly her subterranean Gothic machinery and her half Ossianic, half Richardsonian sentimentality. Two passages from "The Italian" will illustrate these traits. The first describes Ellena Rosalba's attempted escape from the convent where she is imprisoned; the second, her preparations for her marriage, which was broken off a moment later, somewhat like that of Jane Eyre.

"The friar departed, and the nun, still silent, conducted her through many solitary passages, where not even a distant foot-fall echoed, and whose walls were roughly painted with subjects indicative of the severe superstitions of the place, tending to inspire melancholy awe. Ellena's hope of pity vanished as her eyes glanced over these symbols of the disposition of the inhabitants, and on the countenance of the nun characterized by a gloomy malignity, which seemed ready to inflict upon others some portion of the unhappiness she herself suffered. As she glided forward with soundless step, her white drapery, floating along these solemn avenues, and her hollow features touched with the mingled light and shadow which the partial rays of a taper she held occasioned, she seemed like a spectre newly risen from the grave, rather than a living being."

"It was a gloomy evening, and the lake, which broke in dark waves upon the shore, mingled its hollow sounds with those of the wind, that bowed the lofty pines, and swept in gusts among the rocks. . . . As they approached the chapel, Ellena fixed her eyes on the mournful cypresses which waved over it, and sighed. 'Those,' she said, 'are funereal mementoes—not such as should grace the altar of marriage! Vivaldi, I could be superstitious.—Think you not they are portentous of future misfortune? But forgive me; my spirits are weak.' . . . Thus they entered the chapel. Silence, and a kind of gloomy sepulchral light, prevailed within."

In 1795, between Mrs. Radcliffe's "Udolpho" and her "Italian," a new dish was served up for readers in "The Monk" by M. G. Lewis, "a little round, fat, oily man of"—twenty, who had that

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comfortable joy in a good ghost story which goes with an utter absence of the higher imagination. He was induced to finish this work, which he had temporarily laid aside, by reading "The Mysteries of Udolpho," he tells us, "which is, in my opinion, one of the most interesting books that has ever been published." Mrs. Radcliffe reciprocated by drawing a large amount of inspiration from his "Monk" for "The Italian." In both we have priestly intrigue, dark conclaves of the Inquisition, young ladies spirited away to gloomy convents and badly treated, people who escape from these convents by underground passages past a cell where some former monk or nun had died imprisoned, etc. The location of "The Monk" is mainly in Spain, but shifts to Germany long enough to introduce the ghost of a bleeding nun and the charitable conduct of The Wandering Jew. The devil is a leading character, and the only one "in at the death" of the unfortunate brother Ambrosio. Of Mrs. Radcliffe's sentimental appeal "The Monk" has little but replaces this by an equally ever salable ingredient, to wit, immorality. Inasmuch, however, as the popularity of the book is long dead and the demand for the *risqué* yet lives, it is only fair to believe that Lewis's thousands of readers were attracted by his devils, catacombs, and haunted castles as much as by his indecency.

The works of both these authors, though obviously the progeny of Walpole's "Otranto," turn our thoughts to Germany. Lewis had been in that country in 1792, and wrote a large part of his novel at The Hague. He tells us in his Advertisement that "the bleeding nun is a tradition still credited in many parts of Germany; and I have been told, that the ruins of the castle of Lauerstein, which she is supposed to haunt, may yet be seen upon the borders of Thuringia." Mrs. Radcliffe also voyaged on the Rhine the year in which her "Mysteries of Udolpho" was published. Here, as her Journal tells us, she watched "fortresses or towns, many of them placed in the most wild and tremendous situations; their ancient and gloomy structures giving ideas of the sullen tyranny of former times," or remembered that "there is a story faintly recorded concerning them," one of these being "the story, on which the wild and vivid imagination of Ariosto is said to have founded his Orlando." Consequently it was not chance



but a common impulse which made "The Monk" and "The Italian" coincide in date with a flood of German importations.

—Before 1790 English literature had been astonishingly insulated from German. One reason for this had been the barrenness of the latter for centuries before the death of Pope, its great men being either medieval or eighteenth-century with a vast desert between. Another reason was the general ignorance, even among scholars, of the German language, an amusing proof of which is found in the extreme badness of the English translations up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Economic and political conditions also must have drawn English interests toward centralized and cosmopolitan France rather than toward provincial and disorganized Germany. As a result, when England in the last decade before 1800 turned to German writers, she imported with more enthusiasm than discernment; and A. W. Schlegel justly complained that the literature of his country was represented west of the North Sea mainly by its trash.

What was lacking in quality, however, was made up in quantity. At least eleven tales or novels were rendered from the German between 1790 and 1796, several of them medieval or supernatural in character. These included "The Sorcerer" and "The Black Valley" from Veit Weber's "Sagen der Vorzeit," Schiller's "Ghost-seer" and Friederich Kalert's "Geisterbanner" translated as: "The Necromancer: or The Tale of the Black Forest." Bürger's unearthly ballad of "Lenore" appeared in six translations within a year. Much more than this was done in the dramatic field. Goethe's "Stella" was Englished in 1798 and his "Goetz von Berlichingen" by Walter Scott in 1799. Schiller's "Robbers," a wild, melodramatic play glorifying the romantic robber, was translated by Lord Woodhouselee in 1795, and had a second edition the same year. Other translations of it were made by the Rev. William Render in 1799, and by a Mr. Thompson in 1804. Schiller's "Kabale und Liebe" was turned into English by a Mr. Peter Colombine in 1795 and by M. G. Lewis as "The Minister" in 1797; his "Fiesco," in a good translation, came out in 1796. The dominant notes in these plays were excess of passion, romantic love of personal liberty, and wild, often

improbable, tragedy. "The Robbers" had already created a *furor* in Germany and now produced one in England. Coleridge wrote to Southey in 1794: "'Tis past one o'clock in the morning. I sat down at twelve o'clock to read The Robbers of Schiller. I had read, chill and trembling, when I came to the part where the Moor fixes a pistol over the robbers who are asleep. I could read no more. My God, Southey, who is this Schiller, this convulser of the heart?" Two years later Southey in turn wrote to a friend regarding "Kabale und Liebe": "Have you read Cabal and Love? In spite of a translation for which the translator deserves hanging, the fifth act is dreadfully affecting. I want to write my tragedies of the Banditti." William Hazlitt, in the prime of his critical powers, could say: "Five-and-twenty years have elapsed since I first read the translation of 'The Robbers,' but they have not blotted the impression from my mind; it is here still, an old dweller in the chambers of the brain. . . . I do not like Schiller's later style so well." Goethe's "Goetz," which influenced German literature even more than "The Robbers," entered the English arena too late; but its German imitations had been translated before it and had done their work. For instance, James Boaden's "Secret Tribunal" was acted at the Theater-Royal, Covent Garden, and printed 1795. The material for the play was taken directly from a German novel, "Hermann von Unna" (which had already been translated in 1794), but, whatever its father, its grandfather was "Goetz." Like Goethe's play it is located in late medieval Germany, and draws from "Goetz" the scene in Act V before the dread Secret Tribunal (Die Heilige Vehme).

The German invader triumphed not only on the bookseller's counter, but also on the boards of the theater. The chief writer introduced here was Kotzebue, a dramatist who, like Scribe and Clyde Fitch, seemed bent on proving that theatrical success can be independent of literary merit. His ephemeral success reached all over western Europe, and was by no means peculiar to England; but the striking phenomenon there is at once the extent and the brevity of his vogue. At least ten of his plays were translated in the three years from 1798 to 1800, one in 1801, and no more, that we

have discovered, until 1808, after which a few straggling versions appeared.

The most famous of these dramas was "Menschenhass und Reue," freely rendered under the title, "The Stranger," which had presentations and editions galore. It is a painfully sentimental play, in which an erring wife by long continued repentance wins back her husband and cures him of the misanthropy due to her sin. Another, "Adelaide of Wulffingen," belongs to the German medieval current deriving from "Goetz." Sir Hugo of Wulffingen, absent twenty-three years on a crusade in the Holy Land, returns disguised as a pilgrim, and finds his son Theobald living happily with a wife named Adelaide. Then it is discovered that Adelaide is Hugo's natural daughter, and her husband's half-sister. Hugo takes the matter very philosophically, and his long arguments excusing incest are apparently approved by the author; but Adelaide goes insane with horror and kills both her little children. Almost as melodramatic but pleasanter in tone is the Peruvian play which Sheridan adapted as "Pizarro." One cannot help smiling to see the author of "The Critic" responsible for a book that lies open to all his most pointed attacks; but the popular success of the work amply justified his theatrical judgment. Crabb Robinson called it "the most excellent play I ever saw for variety of attractions"; and Tom Moore wrote to his mother in 1799: "I have not yet been to this wonderful 'Pizarro' of Sheridan's, which is putting all London into fevers."

— This wave of melodrama was at its height during the years when the "Lyrical Ballads" were being written and forced on an indifferent public. Its abrupt collapse was partly due to its own excesses, partly to the combined wit and justice of the satirical attacks made on it. Of these there were several, for the literary disease was patent to everybody. W. R. Spencer's play "Urania" (1802) is an obvious burlesque. Manfred, the hero, who "would give more for an old, worm-eaten room full of ghosts, than for a new marble villa full of statues," is bent on marrying a spirit, and the Princess of Tarentum wins him for a husband by playing the part of one. The Prologue, by Lord Townshend, alludes to "fastidious" people who lament that



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Day after day our spectre drama's crammed  
With heavenly spirits or with goblins damned.

One of the popular Pope imitators in 1798 had made a similar attack:

Mark next, how fable, language, fancy flies  
To Ghosts, and Beards, and Hoppergollop cries:  
Lo, from the abyss, unmeaning spectres drawn,  
The Gothic glass, blue flame, and flick'ring lawn!  
Choked with vile weeds, our once proud Avon strays;  
When Novels die, and rise again in plays:  
No Congress props our Drama's falling state,  
The modern ultimatum is "Translate."  
Thence sprout the morals of the German school.

In the same year Fawcett, a friend of Wordsworth, wrote in similar vein and metre:

E'en listless fair ones shall from languor wake,  
And o'er the lines with pleasing terror shake,  
If there the lovely tremblers may peruse  
The harsh, coarse horror of a German muse.  
Let hideous Superstition form the base  
On which the wildly dismal tale you raise:  
Let ghastliest forms, pale ghosts, and goblins grim  
Form of your verse the terrible sublime.

The fiercest and most famous parody, however, was "The Rovers," published in *The Anti-Jacobin* (1797-98). The *Dramatis Personae* include:

"Prior of the Abbey of Quedlinburgh, very corpulent and cruel.

Rogero, a Prisoner in the Abbey, in love with Matilda Pottingen. . . .

Roderic, Count of Saxe Weimar, a bloody tyrant, with red hair and an amorous complexion."

The Prologue tells us:

Too long have Rome and Athens been the rage;  
And classic buskins soiled a British stage.  
To-night our bard, who scorns pedantic rules,

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His plot has borrowed from the German schools;  
—The German schools—where no dull maxims bind  
The bold expansion of the electric mind.  
Fixed to no period, circled by no space,  
He leaps the flaming bounds of time and place:  
Round the dark confines of the forest raves,  
With gentle robbers stocks his gloomy caves.

The first scene is an inn at Weimar. Then—

Scene changes to a subterranean vault in the abbey of Quedlinburgh; with coffins, 'scutcheons, death's-heads and cross-bones. Toads and other loathsome reptiles are seen traversing the obscurer parts of the stage. Rogero appears in chains, in a suit of rusty armour, with his beard grown, and a cap of grotesque form upon his head. . . .

*Rogero.* Eleven years! it is now eleven years since I was first immured in this living sepulchre. . . . Yes, here in the depths of an eternal Dungeon—in the Nursing Cradle of Hell—the Suburbs of Perdition—in a nest of Demons, where Despair, in vain, sits brooding over the putrid eggs of Hope; where Agony woos the embrace of Death.

This is a pointed attack, not only on German adaptations, but also on M. G. Lewis's "Castle Spectre," an original play but modeled on the foreign type, which represents Earl Reginald as confined in a vault under Conway Castle for sixteen years, "emaciated, in coarse garments, his hair hanging wildly about his face, and a chain bound round his body." The "Castle Spectre," first acted 1797, ran sixty nights, continued popular for years, and in print reached an eleventh edition in 1803.

—The effect of "The Rovers," according to Walter Scott, was "that the German school, with its beauties and its defects, passed completely out of fashion." We have already noticed the abrupt cessation of Kotzebue's plays after 1800. Scott's version of "Goetz" in 1799 received only a lukewarm welcome. Coleridge's noble translation of Schiller's "Wallenstein" in 1801 fell so flat that Longman was said to have lost £250 by it. In the same year "Monk" Lewis's "Tales of Wonder," a collection of medieval and supernatural verse narratives by himself, Scott, and others, had a very indifferent success. Both Germanic influences and melodrama revived to some extent later;

but for the time being there was a marked reaction against them; and, as Wordsworth and Coleridge gave their audience the impression of being "very German," this reaction could hardly have lessened their difficulties in winning recognition.

Whether the sales of existing Gothic romances fell off as fast or not, there was a marked chill also in the public attitude toward any more of that type. Maturin's "Montorio" in 1804,—a novel of the Radcliffe brand and about equal in merit, although, it is true, less calculated to win many readers,—met with such indifference that the author modified his type of novel. Mrs. Radcliffe in 1802 began a sixth romance, "Gaston de Blondville," but left it in manuscript for years. Perhaps she recognized its inferiority, perhaps she dropped writing because her financial condition was improved, but also the change in public taste had become too obvious. She lived until 1823, but published nothing after "The Italian." Meanwhile beyond the "fitful fever" of melodrama and the senile decay of neo-classicism new and nobler authors began to loom dimly in the public eye.



## CHAPTER II

### *The Eddy Around Bristol; Rousseau and the French Revolution in Poetry, 1794-1799*

BRISTOL in 1794, though the second largest city in Great Britain, had a woefully small part to show in the history of the nation's literature. Yet during the closing years of the eighteenth century it became the center of a literary vortex which rejuvenated English poetry and made that erstwhile Philistine region the Mecca of many a literary pilgrim. "Ten years ago," wrote Southey in 1800, "Bristol man was synonymous with Boeotian in Greece, and now we are before any of the provincial towns." The poets who made the district famous were for the most part not natives but pilgrims from a distance, whom chance and friends had drawn there; yet the location was in many ways favorable for the development of a new poetic school. The meagerness of local poetic history meant an absence of traditional tyranny in literature, and a freer hand for the innovator than he would have found in London or even in Edinburgh. Neighboring landscapes, with their beautiful alternation of curving bay and suggestively rolling hill, are in marked contrast to that harsh and gloomy environment which colored the poetry of Crabbe. The district lies on the border-line between Anglo-Saxon middle England and the largely Celtic inhabitants of Wales and Cornwall. The chief figure in its literature was the boy Chatterton, whose corpse had been brought back to its birthplace there a quarter of a century before, and the shadow of whose dead hand reaches farther than one realizes across the poems of the Bristol Eddy.

In June, 1794, a Cambridge undergraduate, named Samuel Taylor Coleridge, visiting Oxford to see an old school-fellow, accidentally met there a young Oxonian, Robert Southey, between whom and

himself there immediately sprang up a warm friendship. Together they formed the romantic scheme known as "Pantisocracy," by which the members, having supplied themselves with money, tools, wives, and other necessary *impedimenta*, were to emigrate to America, found a colony on the banks of the Susquehanna, own property in common, and realize the golden dreams of Rousseau. In a few months they had enlisted for this wild scheme several of their college friends. The movement was essentially one of romantic young poets, for, although only two became ultimately famous, all at that time were poets—or thought they were.

O'er the ocean swell,  
Sublime of Hope, I seek the cottaged dell  
Where Virtue calm with careless step may stray,

wrote one of them of the American voyage. The enterprise was also an outburst of that impractical enthusiasm characteristic of youth fresh from college, an enthusiasm generated by four years of a university furnishing ideals and four years of a father supplying all needed cash. It was above all an offshoot of the teachings of Rousseau, with which the heads of its members were seething.

In August of that year Coleridge came to Bristol, and was introduced by Southey to Robert Lovell, the son of a wealthy Quaker; then, or soon after, all three became acquainted with Joseph Cottle, a bookseller and minor poet, who, like Southey, was a Bristol man. The scheme of Pantisocracy gradually evaporated, but left behind a residuum of closely affiliated young poets, a group whose center of gravity, though not their fixed residence, was the great town by the Severn.

Their personal relations, for a time at least, were very close, Lovell, Southey, and Coleridge rooming together for some months. In 1794 the three men conjointly dashed off their worthless drama, "The Fall of Robespierre," the revolutionary effervescence of an hour, later revised by Coleridge and published by him at Cambridge. In 1795 "Poems by Robert Lovell and Robert Southey, of Balliol College, Oxford," were printed at Bath, Coleridge's first book of verse following in the succeeding April. Lovell had already married

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one of the Misses Fricker, of Westbury, a pleasant village two miles from Bristol, and Southey was engaged to another. Coleridge now made love to a third, and he and Southey were married in Chatterton's time-hallowed church of St. Mary Redcliffe. While Southey in 1796 was gone to Spain, his bride boarded with the Cottle sisters, two women, wrote the bridegroom, who "make even bigotry amiable."

Lovell died in 1796, but his place was soon more than filled. In that same year Coleridge, touring the country for subscribers to his new periodical, *The Watchman*, became acquainted with Charles Lloyd at Birmingham, and drew the latter in his wake back to the Bristol region. Lloyd was an ill-balanced man of twenty-one years and considerable ability, whose virtues and literary gifts alike were perverted by lifelong melancholia. He had already written several poems, and soon added others, which were published conjointly with the work of his new companions. In January, 1797, Lloyd, while in London, first met that old school-fellow and friend of Coleridge, Charles Lamb, who about this time became one of their new band of apostles. Lamb's relations were chiefly by letter, for poverty, desk work, and family troubles held him in London; but he was a very genuine part of the circle, corresponding with its various members, writing poetry with them, and helping to mold opinion. That summer he spent an epoch-making week in the green seclusion of Nether Stowey with Coleridge and Wordsworth, and two months later, with Lloyd, visited Southey at Burton. Afterwards in London he had many a pleasant hour with Southey while the latter was studying law and writing "Madoc." Poems by Lamb and Lloyd found a hospitable nook in the second edition of Coleridge's volume in 1797; and "Blank Verse by Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb" appeared the next year. Lloyd dedicated the last-named poems to Robert Southey, whom he tells that "the greater part of them were written beneath your roof, and owe their existence to its quiet comforts." Through Joseph Cottle, also, the group became acquainted with his elder brother Amos, who, like himself, wrote poetry not wisely but too fluently. Then there was Thomas Poole, the learned and high-minded tanner of Nether Stowey, whose good sense kept him from



attempting poetry but made him an excellent inspiration to poets. John Thelwall, also, a revolutionary firebrand, fleeing from governmental persecution, had settled near by in Wales, and both by letters and visits became temporarily a part of the group.

The chief acquisition, however, was Wordsworth. Since 1795 he had been living at Racedown, in Dorsetshire, about fifty miles from Bristol and thirty or forty from Nether Stowey, his house there, incidentally, belonging to a Bristol merchant, whose son had leased it to him. Wordsworth mentioned Southey early in 1796, and apparently knew of Cottle and Coleridge about the same time. In 1797 he came to live near Coleridge, who was the cohesive magnet that drew all these wandering particles together. Passing mention may also be made of William Hazlitt, later one of the greatest prose writers of his age, but at this time merely a callow and meditative youth. Drawn by his enthusiasm for Coleridge, he passed three weeks in the neighborhood of Nether Stowey, and previously had gone to the beautiful vale of Llangollen "by way of initiating myself in the mysteries of natural scenery."

Though gravitating around a great commercial city, this movement was essentially a rural one. A considerable amount of Southey's verse was written in the suburb of Westbury, some of Coleridge's in rustic retirement at Clevedon, ten miles away, where he rented a cottage for a short time with his bride; and the best poetry of all was produced around the little village of Nether Stowey, over thirty miles to the southwest of Bristol, where the Quantock hills look out on the sea. There was a continual coming and going and changing of residence among the writers concerned, which made Bristol the center of the intellectual eddy but by no means the dominant element in the atmosphere.

Socially Wordsworth became affiliated with Coleridge alone rather than with the whole group. His letters to the Cottle brothers, though exceedingly cordial, are few and short. He saw little of Lamb, who most of the time was absent in London, or of Southey and Lloyd, from both of whom Coleridge was drifting away. Wordsworth's brother Christopher by September, 1800, was engaged to Lloyd's sister; and Joseph Cottle tells us of spending a very pleasant

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week at Alfoxden with Coleridge and Wordsworth, in return for which Wordsworth and Dorothy stayed a week with him after quitting Alfoxden; but it is probable that Wordsworth summed up his social relations to the Bristol Parnassus when he wrote in March, 1798: "We have no particular reason to be attached to the neighborhood of Stowey, but the society of Coleridge, and the friendship of Poole."

Shortly after 1798 the group disintegrated. Southey went to Spain, Coleridge and Wordsworth to Germany; and afterwards all three, as well as Lloyd, settled in the Lake region, over two hundred miles from the scene of their early enthusiasms. Lovell was dead; Poole remained at Stowey and the Cottle brothers at Bristol. Thelwall drifted elsewhere. Lamb corresponded with his friends as cordially as ever, but no longer wrote poetry with them. He may be said to have ended his career as a minor poet with the publication and failure of "John Woodvil" in 1802; after that he turned from poetry to scholarship, and eventually from scholarship to the field of his final triumph, the prose essay.

What did this movement represent? Was there any new and dominant note in teaching or literary type common to all its members? Did such almost painfully minor figures as Cottle and Lovell really influence the great minds of Coleridge and Wordsworth or the slightly inferior but none the less commanding intellects of Southey and Lamb? We cannot hope to give a final answer to these questions; nor, could Coleridge or Southey be called from the grave, would they probably be able to give it, so subtle are the influences of environment, so much can a great intellect winnow unconsciously from the inferior minds around it. We do know, however, that Southey in 1806 mentioned "three men now all in their graves, [all Pantisocrats] each of whom produced no little effect upon my character and after life,—Allen, Lovell, and poor Edmund Seward,—whom I never remember without the deepest love and veneration." In August, 1797, Lamb wrote:

I thought on Lloyd;  
All he had been to me.

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Criticism, imaginative suggestion, and the formation of esthetic theory are not by any means the only aids which a galaxy of minor writers offer to their more gifted comrades. For men who are young sympathy and enthusiasm—even if only temporary and marred by personal quarrels—counts much; for men who are poor financial aid is not to be ignored; and there is a confidence begotten from the consciousness of numbers that must have meant a great deal to the gregarious and vacillating mind of Coleridge. All his best writing was kindled in his mind by inspiring companionship; the moment that he felt himself alone in the world he became dumb.

— Certain facts may be accepted without demur. This was the chief semi-organized movement in poetry of the new generation. Every one of the genuine poets in it was under twenty-eight. Here was no “tribe of Ben,” no “Dr. Johnson and his circle,” no ardent young Paul at the feet of a hoary Gamaliel; in every matter, literary, social, or political, there was a general feeling: “Behold, I make all things new.” Young Campbell at this very time was the *protégé* in Edinburgh of the elderly Dr. Anderson; Scott was a legal officer and upholder of the good old order; the Bristol group had broken with the past.

Furthermore, Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth, as well as Amos Cottle, were all Oxford or Cambridge men. In this they differed from Burns, Crabbe, and Rogers, who had no university career; from Cowper, who began poetry late in life when college influences were dead; from Scott and Campbell, who were educated in the north; and from Moore, who studied in Dublin. They were the only spokesmen in poetry for the two great English universities from 1790 to 1807. Neither they nor their *almæ matres*, apparently, looked upon each other with great enthusiasm; but they had as college men a certain common body of thought and feeling. This may partly account for the fact that much of their earlier and poorer work imitates Gray, the scholar poet of Cambridge, Tom Warton, the scholar poet of Oxford, or that plaintive disciple of the Wartons, William Bowles. Amos Cottle’s only title to consideration is a very mediocre translation of Saemund’s “Edda,” continuing the tradition of Gray’s Norse translations. The little body of immature verse



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bequeathed us by Lovell is in almost slavish imitation of Gray, his "Decayed Farmhouse" ending with an epitaph like that of the "Elegy." His sonnets are equally derivative from Bowles, a quotation from whom heads the book. Bowles had almost no social intercourse with the group; but his little volume of melodious and gently melancholy sonnets was the idol to which all did homage. "As much bad criticism as you please," cried Coleridge to Holcroft in 1794, "but no *blasphemy* against the divinity of *a Bowles!*" Lloyd has two quotations from Bowles in the Advertisement to the poems of 1795, and a third prefixed to those of 1797. Wordsworth in 1793 had read his sonnets on Westminster bridge, without stirring until the book was finished. Southey in 1832 spoke of Bowles's "sweet and unsophisticated style; upon which I endeavored, now almost forty years ago, to form my own." As late as 1815 Coleridge could say, "The being so near him has been a source of constant gratification to me." Lamb in 1796 bracketed Burns, Bowles, and Cowper as among those who redeemed poetry from the charge of degeneracy; and his eight sonnets published in 1797 have several reminiscences of the popular sonneteer. Warton's distinctively medieval touch appears more rarely, as in Southey's sonnet,

Thou ruined relique of the ancient pile;

in Lovell's on Stonehenge:

Was it a spirit on yon shapeless pile?  
It wore methought an hoary Druid's form,  
Musing on ancient days!

or in that of Lloyd on Craig-Millar Castle:

This hoary labyrinth, the wreck of Time,  
Solicitous with timid step I tread,  
Scale the stern battlement, or vent'rous climb  
Where the rent watch-tower bows its grassy head.

Another bond that united the group was ~~their sympathy with the~~ French Revolution. All over England and Scotland, in Edinburgh and especially in London, there were revolutionary enthusiasts, organizations, and various types of more or less valuable prose

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literature; but nowhere else could the French "citizen" find such a nest of sympathizing young poets as around Bristol. Poole had faced social ostracism and Thelwall governmental prosecution for their outspoken opinions on this head. The hero of Lloyd's immature "Oswald"

Would oft with shuddering indignation scan  
The dark abuses of the social plan;

and the more mature Lloyd, the associate of Lamb and Southey, looked forward to the time

when *equal man*  
*Shall deem the world his temple.*

Coleridge in 1795 lectured at Bristol on the French Revolution. The joint play on that subject by himself, Southey, and Lovell, bears out the statement of Cottle that "all three of my young friends, in that day of excitement, felt . . . a hearty sympathy with the efforts made in France to obtain political ameliorations." Southey's worthless drama of "Wat Tyler," written in 1794, though not published for many years, is full of revolutionary doctrine.

What matters me who wears the crown of France?—  
Whether a Richard or a Charles possess it?  
They reap the glory, they enjoy the spoil:  
We pay, we bleed. The sun would shine as cheerly,  
The rains of heaven as seasonably fall,  
Though neither of these royal pests existed;

or again:

Why are not all these empty ranks abolished;  
King, slave, and lord, ennobled into *man*?  
Are we not equal all?

Wordsworth, probably in the same year, fresh from those experiences on the continent which are narrated in "The Prelude," wrote: "Hereditary distinctions, and privileged orders of every species, I think must necessarily counteract the progress of human improvement; hence it follows that I am not amongst the admirers"



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of the British Constitution." Is it any wonder that the good people of Nether Stowey looked askance on the whole set; that Wordsworth was practically ordered out of his comfortable quarters at Alfoxden by the scandalized owner; and that the government hurried down a spy to keep watch on him and Coleridge as they lounged among the sand-dunes, composing the "Lyrical Ballads"?

Hand in hand with the feeling of these authors for the French Revolution went their enthusiasm for the "return to nature" taught by Rousseau. Other poets, like Burns and Cowper, had written about nature when circumstances had brought them in touch with it; but nowhere else in English poetry had there been such an organized expedition to find it. "Had I, my dear Collins, the pen of Rousseau," wrote Southey in 1793, "I would attempt to describe the various scenes which have presented themselves to me, and the various emotions occasioned by them . . . What scene can be more calculated to expand the soul than the sight of nature, in all her loveliest works?" More simple but more sincere were his words in the summer of 1797: "You know not how infinitely my happiness is increased by residing in the country." Coleridge in "Frost at Midnight" rejoices that his babe shall not grow up like himself in a town, but shall

wander like a breeze

By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags  
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds  
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores  
And mountain crags; so shalt thou see and hear  
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible  
Of that eternal language, which thy God  
Utters.

The unearthly splendors of "Christabel" and "The Ancient Mariner" have blinded many to the large amount of nature poetry written by Coleridge in this period, especially his blank verse. It is more negative in its magic than the wild rhyming masterpieces, but has all the charm of a restful landscape. Still more has the nature element been overlooked in Southey's "English Eclogues," written in 1798 and 1799 chiefly at Westbury. In spite of their limp blank verse, they have a pleasant aroma of humble life, and

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sweet brier, scenting sweet  
The morning air; rosemary and marjoram,  
All wholesome herbs; and then, that woodbine wreathed  
So lavishly around the pillared porch.

These lines are from "The Ruined Cottage," identical in title with an earlier poem by Wordsworth, afterwards incorporated in "The Excursion." Southey's "Inscriptions" of this period, without being great, often have pleasing rural touches; and the one "For the Cenotaph at Ermenonville" reminds us that

Rousseau  
Loved these calm haunts of Solitude and Peace;  
Here he has heard the murmurs of the lake,  
And the soft rustling of the poplar grove,  
When o'er its bending boughs the passing wind  
Swept a gray shade. Here, if thy breast be full,  
If in thine eye the tear devout should gush,  
His *spirit* shall behold thee, to thine home  
From hence returning, purified of heart.

Joseph Cottle's "Malvern Hills" (1798), the nearest thing to respectable poetry that he ever did, is mainly a description of landscape beauties in the historic region of "Piers Plowman's Vision." The blank verse is woefully flat, but some of the word pictures are pleasing. It was only after 1800 that Cottle turned to impossible epics, which seem a *reductio ad absurdum* of the work of his fellow Bristowan Southey, and made his long-suffering critic Lamb cry out, "My God!" During his earlier period, his companions accepted him as a genuine poet and felt at times that his

modest verse to musing Quiet dear  
Is rich with tints heaven-borrowed.

Lloyd was also a preacher of the return to nature, but of a different and less pleasing return. In him it is the neurotic's desire to flee from the conflicts of life, seeking in nature, not its beauty, but its restfulness, not a Parnassus but a sanatorium. For this reason, though he writes much about landscapes he is both vague and

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unsatisfactory; and his best work, which is only mediocre, deals with his own griefs in a mood more sincere than wholesome. His blank verse is often stilted; but at times like Cowper or Wordsworth, as in the following lines about his former home and dead mother (written December, 1796):

No taper twinkled cheerily to tell  
That she had heap'd the hospitable fire,  
Spread the trim board, and with an anxious heart  
Expected me, her "dearest boy," to spend  
With *her* the evening hour! Oh, no! 'twas gone,  
The friendly taper, and the warm fire's glow.

A little later he utters a passage decidedly Wordsworthian:

Methinks he acts the purposes of life,  
And fills the measure of his destiny  
With best approved wisdom, who retires  
To some majestic solitude; his mind  
Rais'd by those visions of eternal love,  
The rock, the vale, the forest, and the lake,  
The sky, the sea, and everlasting hills.

For Wordsworth a few years earlier there had been a time when nature

To me was all in all—I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion;

and Dorothy could write of her brother: "He is never so happy as when in a beautiful country." By 1794 even amid the landscape splendor of Keswick, he could "begin to wish much to be in Town. Cataracts and mountains are good occasional society, but they will not do for constant companions"; and by the time "Tintern Abbey" was composed he had

learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity.



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Yet that experience only drew him more firmly to the poetry of rural life. He had, as he believed, sifted truth from error in Rousseau, and found the truth a valuable mental leaven.

Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth.

Though both rural and provincial, the Bristol Eddy introduced more foreign influences than any other poetical movement during the career of Napoleon. We have already seen how much of it was French. A marked element in it also was German. Part of this was caught from the popular German current, which nobody in those years escaped.

Schiller, that hour I would have wished to die,

cried Coleridge on reading "The Robbers." Wordsworth's "Borderers," written just before he joined Coleridge, and begun in the year in which Woodhouselee's translation of "The Robbers" appeared, shows many traces of kinship both with that drama and with the French Revolution, though, like all the author's borrowings, very much Wordsworthized. As in Schiller's play the hero is a romantic young idealist at the head of a wild band of freebooters; in both we have a plotting subordinate, a wronged and dying old man, a tragic love affair for the young chief, and a moderate amount of Gothic ruin. Coleridge's "Osorio," which he read to Wordsworth soon after their first meeting, with its overdone passion and touches of subterranean horror, was probably leavened with German yeast. The trip which the two men made late in 1798 to the country of Herder and Klopstock was the result of past enthusiasms fully as much as a generator of new ones. Even in the case of "The Ancient Mariner" Southey, reviewing it, called it "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity." To a reader of the current version this dictum may seem ridiculous; but if he turns to the 1798 edition he will find the criticism, though untrue, by no means unnatural. There *was* a minor element of the Germano-Gothic in the original wording of "The



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Ancient Mariner," which was sloughed off in later revision. Lines such as

His bones were black with many a crack,  
All black and bare, I ween;  
Jet-black and bare, save where with rust  
Of mouldy damps and charnel crust  
They're patched with purple and green;

or

A gust of wind sterte up behind  
And whistled through his bones;  
Thro' the holes of his eyes and the hole of his mouth,  
Half whistles and half groans,

make one think of the spectral bridegroom in Bürger's "Lenore." Coleridge in 1796 had planned writing a life of Jacob Boehme, the Bohemian mystic who so influenced Blake; and it may be that that mysticism of which his contemporaries complained so bitterly was already beginning to flow in from a foreign channel.

A separate German influence was at work on Southey. Probably the foremost leader in scholarly, as opposed to melodramatic, importation of Teutonic literature was William Taylor of Norwich, who, according to Professor Beers, "did more than any man of his generation, by his translations and critical papers in *The Monthly Magazine* and *Monthly Review*, to spread a knowledge of the new German literature in England." Southey had read his translation of "Lenore" and "the other ballad of Bürger, in *Monthly Magazine*," which "is most excellent," by July, 1796. In 1798 the two men were introduced, and began a correspondence, chiefly on literary subjects. Even before their meeting Southey was already acquainted with Taylor's writings, so that the influence on him must have been almost continuous during the last four years of the century. "You have made me hunger and thirst after German poetry," wrote Southey to his new friend in 1799. The prefatory note to the "English Eclogues" tells us that the poet was inspired to compose them "by what was told me of the German Idyls by my friend Mr. William Taylor of Norwich." He adds (in 1799) that they "bear

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no resemblance to any poems in our language," which in a sense is true; and yet they constantly remind one of Wordsworth. A very different atmosphere, that of the Germano-Gothic, mixed with the influence of Percy's "Reliques," is felt in Southey's Ballads and Metrical Tales, most of which were written between 1796 and 1798. M. G. Lewis included his "Old Woman of Berkeley" and "St. Patrick's Purgatory," without his consent, in the "Tales of Wonder"; and "the metre is Mr. Lewis's invention" in "Mary, the Maid of the Inn."

Behind a wide column, half breathless with fear,  
She crept to conceal herself there:  
That instant the moon o'er a dark cloud shone clear,  
And she saw in the moonlight two ruffians appear,  
And between them a corpse did they bear.

The author is usually serious, at times humorous, but at his best in a mood between the two, like that of Burns's "Tam O'Shanter," as in his thoroughly enjoyable "Old Woman of Berkeley":

And in He came with eyes of flame,  
The Devil, to fetch the dead;  
And all the church with his presence glowed  
Like a fiery furnace red.

In Lewis's "Monk" the reader does not know whether to yield himself up to the intended shudder or the instinctive joy of ridicule; in Southey he can enjoy both at once, so evenly are humor and seriousness blended. There was none too much intercourse after 1797 between Southey and his brother-in-law Coleridge, whose irregular habits he justly condemned, and who had never quite forgiven him for abandoning Pantisocracy; nevertheless part of Taylor's influence may have filtered through the author of the "English Eclogues" to the authors of the "Lyrical Ballads." Several of the Eclogues and of the Metrical Tales also, were sent for criticism in the autumn of 1798 to Lamb, who was in friendly correspondence with both Westbury and Nether Stowey.

Another badge of the Bristol movement, and the one that roused most discussion, was the advocacy of simple as opposed to "poetic"

diction. Though badly stated and carried to excess, the theories of Wordsworth and his friends were that voice of the people which in literature is so often the voice of God. To understand them, however, one must realize what they attacked. The object of their hostility was not mainly Pope but Pope's late eighteenth-century imitators, who were carrying to ever more hollow fatuity a literary tradition gone to seed. Coleridge was at once contemptuous toward "the ignoramuses and Pope-admirers," and willing to include Pope himself among the "great single names." Johnson in prose and writers like Erasmus Darwin in poetry had "elevated" the homely Anglo-Saxon until a reaction was inevitable. "I absolutely nauseate Darwin's poems," declared Coleridge as early as 1796. Mackenzie lamented that Johnson's greatest fault was in rejecting every word from the Saxon. Richard Sharp, who in 1787 read a paper before the Manchester society on the Nature and Utility of Eloquence, was a fervent advocate of the simple style as opposed to Johnsonian pedantry. "Johnsonism," he said, "has become almost a general disease." Wordsworth considered Chesterfield, the contemporary of Pope, as the last great prose writer in English before Johnson "vitiated the language." This was in prose, not poetry; but the two types of literature are bound to influence each other. The French Revolution by emphasizing popular rights had put a premium on the language of the people; and this, combined with the decay of neo-classicism, produced a rebound not confined to England. Crabb Robinson in 1803 lent Herder Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads," and "found that Herder agreed with Wordsworth as to poetical language. Indeed Wordsworth's notions on that subject are quite German."

In the case of Coleridge, and to some degree of Wordsworth, simple language was a reaction from the turgid or stilted phraseology of their own earlier poems. They worded the declaration of poetic independence; but it is a question if the Bristol group as a body had not helped evolve it. Lamb had been preaching a certain kind of simplicity at least to the bombastic Coleridge for two years. "Cultivate simplicity, Coleridge, or rather, I should say, banish elaborateness" (1796). "Write thus . . . and I shall never quarrel



with you about simplicity" (1796). "I will enumerate some woeful blemishes, some of 'em sad deviations from that simplicity which was your aim" (1797). Wordsworth declared that he "never cared a straw about the 'theory,' and the 'preface' was written at the request of Mr. Coleridge, out of sheer good nature." If Wordsworth's later defence of the Preface was due to North Country obstinacy rather than esthetic conviction, the ultimate germ of the much discussed "theory" might be traced back to the gentle Elia. Lamb's own poetry is usually quite free from the artificial phrase, as in the following:

A wayward son ofttimes was I to thee:  
And yet, in all our little bickerings,  
Domestic jars, there was, I know not what  
Of tender feeling, that were ill exchanged  
For this world's chilling friendships, and their smiles  
Familiar, whom the heart calls strangers still.

Southey (November, 1797) quotes these lines with approval, and adds: "I am aware of the danger of studying simplicity of language—but you will find in my blank verse a fulness of phrase when the subject requires it," indicating that Southey advocated homely language for homely themes, as his practice indicates.

So much for the general phenomena of the Bristol Eddy, in which the exact limits between individual and communal activity can never be determined. A few words may be added on such works of each poet as have not already been considered. Poole wrote no poetry; and the verse of Thelwall was so exceedingly bad that had he been condemned for literary instead of political sins we should all sympathize with his judges. Enough has been said about the perishable rhyming ware of Lovell, Lloyd, and the Cottles. A word further should be added, however, about Joseph Cottle as a publisher. He was a vain man, and in his "Reminiscences" tried to make the public consider him too much of a Maecenas, with the result that it has considered him too much of an ass. No one can read the correspondence of the Bristol and Lake poets without feeling their genuine friendliness toward him; and as business man and financial backer he must have given the literary movement a decided impetus.



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He published ~~practically everything printed by the Bristol authors between 1796 and 1798, and apparently on better terms than any one else would offer them.~~ He could hardly have grown rich from these transactions, for in the autumn of 1798 he quit the publishing business—gave up the selling of poetry for the uninterrupted composition of it, thereby inflicting a double wound on the Muses. It is hard to take his authorship seriously; but there is reason to believe that he encouraged far better poetry than he wrote. In a letter which all detractors of honest Joseph should read, Southey wrote to him April 20, 1808: "You bought them [his copyrights] on the chance of their success, which no London bookseller would have done; and had they not been bought, they could not have been published at all. Nay, if you had not purchased 'Joan of Arc,' the poem never would have existed, nor should I, in all probability, ever have obtained that reputation which is the capital on which I subsist, nor that power which enables me to support it. . . . Your house was my house when I had no other. The very money with which I bought my wedding-ring and paid my marriage fees, was supplied by you. It was with your sisters that I left Edith during my six months' absence, and for the six months after my return it was from you that I received, week by week, the little on which we lived, till I was enabled to live by other means. . . . Sure I am, there never was a more generous or a kinder heart than yours; and you will believe me when I add, that there does not live that man upon earth whom I remember with more gratitude and more affection." According to Cottle also, Coleridge wrote on the blank leaf of his own early poems: "Had it not been for you, none, perhaps, of them would have been published, and many not written." The statements of the expublisher are "a vain thing for safety"; but we read in Coleridge's letter to him that spring: "I feel what I owe you, and independently of this I love you as a friend." Half a century later the aged Wordsworth wrote to Cottle: "And now let me bid you affectionately good-bye, with assurance that I do and shall retain to the last a remembrance of your kindness and of the many pleasant and happy hours which, at one of the most interesting periods of my life, I passed in your neighborhood and in your company."

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No one can judge the verse of Lamb without remembering the circumstances under which it was composed. Gradgrind routine and domestic calamity had clutched him as between the jaws of a trap and would have crushed the sublimely evanescent vision in any one. His period of comparative leisure came late in life when many men can write good prose but few good poetry, and so he became a great essayist, only a minor poet; yet we are not sure that this was what nature intended. London society he had practically none; his epistolary relations with Stowey and Bristol were his social all-in-all.

Alone, obscure, without a friend,  
A cheerless, solitary thing,

the wonder is that he accomplished what he did. Out of the bitterness of broken friendships, and few to break, he distilled at least one undying poem, "The Old Familiar Faces"; and his drama of "John Woodvil," unspeakably bad in construction, has yet many charming lines that carry us back to the forest of Arden and the great dramatist that Lamb imitated so crudely but so sincerely.

In connection with this play we may notice the amount of closet drama produced by the Bristol and Stowey writers. In addition to Wordsworth's "Borderers," Coleridge's "Osorio," and Lamb's "John Woodvil," which was begun in the year of the "Lyrical Ballads," Lloyd in that same year wrote his dull drama "The Duke D'Ormond," although this was not published until 1822, when it appeared as part of a new and greater wave of unactable poetical tragedies.

Of Southey there is more to say, both in praise and blame. Most of his short poems and half of his long ones were composed during the Bristol period. His "Joan of Arc," published in 1796, is now his most unreadable volume, but curiously enough during his early life was the most popular of his works. In fact for all the poetry of this group public applause seemed inversely as merit. Coleridge's uneven and turgid early work got not only better sales but better reviews than "The Ancient Mariner," and more favorable comment from his fellow poets. In such a discerning critic as Lamb—though he was young then—"Joan" roused a burst of enthusiasm that



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to-day makes us doubt our eyesight. Was it the halo of the French Revolution which gave such a factitious value to the story of medieval France in her struggle for liberty, or was Lamb blinded by friendship and the public by stupidity? This was the first of Southey's long epics. "Madoc," second in composition though not in publication, was a better but very ponderous work. He had had it in his mind ever since he was fourteen. It was to be the pillar of his reputation. For years he had looked over the neighboring Welsh hills, dreaming of that Cymric forerunner of Columbus, and had developed a story with a magnificent opportunity for romantic atmosphere, the first half being in medieval Wales, the second among the Aztec Indians of North America. But that very opportunity showed what the poem lacked. Its appeal is almost wholly to intellectual curiosity, neither to the emotions nor the ear. Haunting cadences, poignant pathos, outbursts of rapture it has not to give. For the patient professorial brain "Madoc" is not unreadable, but its attractions are those of a book of travel, its best remembered passages the ones describing Indian customs and accouterments. And the appeal to intellectual curiosity can hold only when based on facts, not on figments of the imagination. A similar criticism could be passed on all Southey's long poems; yet "Thalaba," written half near Bristol and half in Spain, has much subdued music and much delight of wandering through

perilous seas in faëry lands forlorn.

There are many passages to which we gladly recur; but a long narrative poem, like a drama, must depend on its human interest to carry it; and here no human interest, not even an allegorical one, is genuinely felt. Reading "Thalaba" is like wandering from room to room in a deserted palace, with the gleam of marble, the beauty of carvings, dim figures on wavering curtains, and only the monotonous echo of our own footsteps from chamber to chamber. Southey has been condemned for stubborn wrong-headedness in thus persevering with his epic series. That he was on the wrong track is unquestionable; but with Lamb saying *à propos* of "Joan," "On the whole, I expect Southey one day to rival Milton"; with Cole-

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ridge writing of "Madoc," "I feel as certain, as my mind dare feel on any subject, that it would lift you with a spring into a reputation that would give immediate sale to your after compositions"; and with William Taylor (and Landor later on) urging him to follow in the epic footsteps of Milton and Klopstock,—we cannot feel that the fault was wholly Southey's. The Bristol Eddy had helped whirl him into the wrong course and produced from him three epics in half a decade, whereas he produced only two more during over forty years.

In 1799 and 1800 when the sudden poetical harvest was ending, Southey garnered its last ears in his "Annual Anthology." Some of the contributions are from forgotten minors, and others from Mrs. Opie, then just on the eve of her career as a novelist. Most of them, however, are from men connected with the Bristol Eddy, Southey, Lamb, Lloyd, Coleridge, Southey's friend William Taylor, Lamb's friend George Dyer, Humphry Davy, then a young and poetical scientist, who came to Bristol just after the departure of Wordsworth and Coleridge, besides posthumous poems of Lovell. In 1803 Southey very appropriately closed the Bristol chapter of his career by editing with Cottle the poetry of Chatterton.

Before passing on to the two greatest members of the eddy, we must pause a moment for that prose poetess who did so much to inspire them both, Dorothy Wordsworth. During the Stowey period, she, her brother, and Coleridge were, in the words of Professor Harper, "three persons and one soul."

She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,

said her grateful brother; and observations of nature found in her Journal turn up again in "Christabel." She has left us no enduring poetry of her own; but in the last analysis did she not do a greater work for English verse than Joanna Baillie or Mrs. Hemans?

The poems of Coleridge during his Bristol and Nether Stowey period are enduring memorials of three brief stages in the rapid unfolding of his genius. The first class are rather bookish echoes of late eighteenth-century movements, the supposedly Pindaric ode on "The Departing Year," turgid blank verse in the style of eighteenth-



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century Miltonians, as in the "Religious Musings," and sonnets which he frankly entitled as imitations of Bowles. The second class comprises blank verse descriptions of nature in more sweet and homely language, with less of bad philosophy and much more of good observation, "The Nightingale" and "This Lime Tree Bower My Prison." Both of these types are paralleled in the verse of his associates. Last comes the splendid output of his one *annus mirabilis*, the brief harvest on which his reputation depends: "The Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," "Kubla Khan," "The Three Graves," "Love," and the similar, though inferior "Ballad of the Dark Ladie." These in musical key are related to Wordsworth's output during the same period, a result of the same close intimacy. All these poems of Coleridge, and every one written by Wordsworth at Alfoxden,\* including "Peter Bell," are in iambic 8's or 8's and 6's closely akin to the swing of the old ballad. Neither of these men used that rhythm so consistently at any other time. The favorite metre for Wordsworth and Coleridge alike, whether before or after this period, was the pentameter line, which both used in sonnet, couplet, stanza, and blank verse. Also in both poets at this time the language takes on a simplicity not characteristic of the man. Coleridge, not only before but after this period, not only in verse but in prose and in private correspondence, had an elaborate, at times a turgid, style. The poetical diction of Wordsworth, starting from the rhetorical heights of Erasmus Darwin, descended into the valley of humility in the "Lyrical Ballads," and for nearly twenty years afterward climbed a gradual ascent toward the dignified language of Milton. The Stowey period represents what is best in Coleridge, what is second best in Wordsworth, but not what is typical in either. It was not the permanent Wordsworth, the disciple of Milton, the dignified author of "Michael," but a temporary experimenting Wordsworth, who wrote of a woman's grief:

It dried her body like a cinder,  
And almost turned her brain to tinder.†

\* He wrote "Tintern Abbey" after leaving Alfoxden.

† "The Thorn," original version.

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The peculiar characteristics in the verse of this period must be partly due to the influence of Percy's "Reliques." They were not confined to Wordsworth and Coleridge. Southey, who enumerates the "Reliques" among the books that influenced his growing mind, between 1796 and 1800 wrote a number of poems which he also called "ballads," several of which were in the regular 8's and 6's of "The Ancient Mariner," "The Three Graves," and "We Are Seven." Southey's ballads have no great merit, and deal in a rather crude supernaturalism unlike either the airy fictions of "Christabel" or the homespun realities of "Goody Blake." Yet they diverge from the previous and subsequent manner of the author as do the poems of his friends, and do occasionally suggest these:

The night was calm, the night was dark;  
No star was in the sky;  
The wind it waved the willow boughs;  
The stream flowed quietly.

The night was calm, the air was still;  
Sweet sung the nightingale:  
The soul of Jonathan was soothed;  
His heart began to fail.

Incidentally in 1800 Lamb composed two poems entitled "Ballads" sufficiently unlike those of his friends, but the only ballad imitations that he is known to have written. The ballad type appears in Southey in 1796, in Coleridge 1797, in Wordsworth 1798, suggesting a very natural channel for more than one form of influence: from some other member of the group to Coleridge, then from Coleridge to his friend. The original version of "The Ancient Mariner" borrowed several archaic words from Percy's eighteenth-century "Sir Cauline": and the "fair Christabelle" of the same ballad may have mothered the "sweet Christabel" of the greater genius. The sudden vogue of Bürger's "Lenore" in 1796 had quickened interest in folk poetry.

Many characteristics of the "Lyrical Ballads" must also have owed something to local atmosphere. The low, though beautiful, Quantock hills, the emotional and obsequious peasant of the south-

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west, as shown in "Simon Lee" and "The Last of the Flock," are in marked contrast with the frowning peaks of Cumberland, and the silent pride of her poor, the men of "Michael" and "The Brothers." All that gets into the blood. This is especially true of a landscape lover such as Wordsworth, whose poetry, both in rhythm and mood, changes with the scenery through which he travels. He has one set of metres and thoughts on Highland heather, another by his native lakes, and a third at Nether Stowey. The restful charm of the rolling country has crept into his metre and diction, and into his conception of character also. In his "Lyrical Ballads" the emphasis is laid on the pathos, not the dignity, of the poor man's life; in the later "Michael," "The Brothers," "The Leech Gatherer," and the sixth and seventh books of "The Excursion," the emphasis is reversed. His "ballads" have grown like plants from the soil of the West Country, and the germ of almost every one of them can be found in some definite locality or incident there. As for Coleridge, although he was Anglo-Saxon in blood, his family had lived in a region full of Celtic people and Celtic traditions; there is a Welsh or Irish glamour about the rarest of his poetry: and perhaps he could do his best work on the borderland of the Cymric peoples. We read in Mr. Salmon's book that a "characteristic that links the Quantocks with the farther West, is the presence of pixies. The pixy is the special Celtic variant of the ordinary fairy or elf, and it only lingers now in the West of England. Its chief homes are on Dartmoor, and in Cornwall; but its presence on Exmoor, and the Quantocks prove continuance of Celtic tradition. . . . Within living memory a farmer is said to have seen some threshing his corn, in a barn near Holford village." The village in question is close to Alfoxden. Hazlitt records that Coleridge at Nether Stowey complained because Wordsworth "was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place." Certainly there is a magic about the first part of "Christabel," written at Nether Stowey, which is missing from the second, composed among the Lakes, and the difference may not be wholly due to opium. In sharp contrast to the fairy tales of Stowey, Professor Harper says that "few mountainous regions in old populated countries are so unblessed with legends as the English Lake district.



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It has virtually no local folk-songs." So, although in one sense "Christabel" and "The Ancient Mariner" belong to the most un-localized type of poetry, they originated in a district favorable to their nature. It was to the song of the nightingale at dark and the deep bass of the ocean by day, against a background of fairy legend and unruined local faith that they

Rose like an exhalation, with the sound  
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet.

{ One feature of the Bristol Eddy which has never been emphasized is that it was financially a subsidized movement. In January, 1798, the Wedgewood brothers began their annual payment to Coleridge of £150 a year, that he might be free to write poetry, and before that he had received financial aid from Lloyd, who was wealthy. Wordsworth since 1795 had been living mainly on the income from £900 left him by Raisley Calvert. Genuine assistance was given by Cottle to both Coleridge and Southey. All this may appear very sordid to people who condemn economics; it would not to Wordsworth himself, who in his sonnet "To the Memory of Raisley Calvert" said that the legacy made his poetical career possible:

That I, if frugal and severe, might stray  
Where'er I liked; and finally array  
My temples with the Muse's diadem.

And it was the man who received no such aid, who was under the financial pressure from which the others were free, Charles Lamb, who during this period, and for many years after, produced the work least worthy of his powers.

The literary activity around Bristol represented neither a school nor an enduring social group nor a definitely formed theory of art. It did give encouragement and inspiration. It did form individual friendships that lasted till death; and through these it passed on the torch of poetical enthusiasm to later groups and schools. It began a new *régime* in poetry, not by its critical theories but by the encouragement of genius. What Burns and Blake, Chatterton and Cowper



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groping alone had failed to do, was done at last; and a new creative era for literature began

On sea-ward Quantock's heathy hills,  
Where quiet sounds from hidden rills  
Float here and there, like things astray,  
And high o'er head the skylark shrills.

### CHAPTER III

#### *The Scotch Group and the Antiquarian Movement in Poetry (1800-1805 and thereafter)*

THE end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth found almost all creative poetry of high rank active in two small areas: around and to the southwest of Bristol—with allowance for the fact that Wordsworth moved in the interim to Westmoreland; and around and to the southwest of Edinburgh. By 1795 the best poetry of Burns, Cowper, and Blake was already written, to say nothing of the fact that the latter was utterly unknown. Crabbe was in the midst of his twenty-year silence, Rogers in the midst of one almost equally long. Byron had not risen, and Moore had not found himself. At the Scottish capital Campbell in 1799 gave the world his "Pleasures of Hope"; and near by a little knot of young Scotchmen, with whom Campbell came in contact but to whom he did not belong, laid the foundation for a new literary development in some ways like, in others markedly unlike, that around the banks of the Severn.

The Bristol and northern eddies had certain features in common. Both were made up of young men. Both developed a tendency toward simple language in poetry. Both showed in metre and other respects the influence of Percy's "Reliques." Both were temporarily affected by the popular German wave and later shook off a large part of its influence. Yet not less fundamental than the likenesses were the differences between them. The Bristol authors were revolutionary and permeated with French and German thought; the other body conservative and traditionally Scotch, even provincial, in their outlook on life. Wordsworth and Coleridge were interested in abstract philosophy looking toward the future; the Scotch writers

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in concrete research revealing the past. The southern poets were often introspective and at times melancholy; the northern ones, in their writings at least, objective and energetically serene, and as men more athletic in body and more martial in spirit than Lamb, Lloyd, Southey, and Coleridge. Each eddy began independently; the Bristol and Stowey poets hearing nothing of their Scottish brethren before 1802, and their Scottish brethren knowing but little of them until after that date.

The center and leader of the northern group was, of course, — Walter Scott; but it would be untrue to think of the others as mere imitators and satellites of his. They had been working or training along similar lines before they met him; they gave up neither their characteristics nor literary ideals in working with him; and he himself, likable and leading character though he was, had not at that time been recognized, even locally, as a great writer.

Between 1795, when he was fired by William Taylor's translation of Bürger's "Lenore," and 1799, when he published his translation of Goethe's "Goetz von Berlichingen," Scott was temporarily carried away by the popular German tide. He printed his own translation of "Lenore" and "The Wild Huntsman," he wrote a dramatic German adaptation, "The House of Aspen," which he somewhat apologetically printed many years later; and he also translated or adapted in manuscript other poems and dramas, which his cannie Scotch sense kept him from inflicting upon a long-suffering world. With all the enthusiasm of youth he named his cavalry horse Lenore and carried from the office of a prominent Edinburgh surgeon a skull and crossbones to adorn his own sanctum. This Germanic spasm, though it left permanent traces on his writings, appears to have abated by 1800. Goethe's "Goetz," with all its faults, showed him by contrast the absurdities of Goethe's imitators; and the revulsion in popular feeling throughout Great Britain must have told on a man so young as the translator and so free from literary conceit. He abandoned his temporary enthusiasm for another that had always been coëxistent with it, that had begun earlier in his life and was destined to influence him far more, an enthusiasm for a type of



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literature in some ways akin to the German, in others wholly different, the Ballad poetry of the Scotch Border.

Though the son of an Edinburgh lawyer, Scott had dwelt from childhood on the memories of the old border chiefs who were his ancestors. At twenty-one he had visited the wildest regions of Liddesdale, partly "to pick up some of the ancient *riding ballads*, said to be still preserved among the descendants of the moss-troopers." During seven years after this he made "raids" in Liddesdale, gathering knowledge of life in these unsophisticated regions and also materials that were later used in the "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border." Although for a long time he would seem to have been impelled by a young man's love of seeing life rather than by a definite aim of producing a book or encouraging a literary movement, yet he was preparing for both. No man could be less like the author of "Christabel" than he; but he shared with that wayward genius the power of attracting men. As Coleridge gradually drew together the poetical followers of Rousseau and metaphysics, one by one, so Scott gradually impressed into his service every antiquarian in the region until he had formed a little cohort of men who transmuted antiquarianism into poetry. The first of these was Dr. Elliot of Cleughhead, whom Scott met in 1792, and who before that event had gathered a large MSS. collection of border ballads. Inspired by his young friend, for whom he "would have gane through fire and water," Dr. Elliot now mined with redoubled vigor the ballad veins of the mountain region. Incidentally, as an influence on Scott's mood, though not a source for the "Minstrelsy," we should mention that one of his most intimate friends both now and after was Thomas Thompson, called by Lockhart, "the first legal antiquary of our time in Scotland." In 1798 "Monk" Lewis made a journey to Edinburgh; and, having already heard that Scott had a few German translations, and having corresponded with him about them, now made his acquaintance. Lewis was a pseudo-poet and pseudo-scholar; but he was then collecting unearthly ballads for the "hob-goblin repast" of his "Tales of Wonder," and so waked a responsive chord at once in the German and the ballad chamber of his friend's heart. He included several of Scott's early *diablerie* poems in his

unfortunate "Tales of Wonder" (1801), used his influence with the publisher Bell to get "Goetz" printed, and introduced Scott to London society when the latter ran down there manuscript hunting in the British Museum in 1799. Lewis, as a famous writer, was listened to with extreme deference by his greater but more modest companion, gave Scott lessons in metre, fanned his youthful love for the terrible, and in various ways, mostly unfortunate, became a passing part of the northern literary eddy.

It was not, however, until 1800 that there really existed a poetico-antiquarian group. Richard Heber, brother of the future poet, happened to spend that winter in Edinburgh; and, being a learned man with a profound knowledge of medieval literature, soon became a welcome fellow worker with the as yet unrecognized "wizard of the north." In an obscure bookshop Heber found an uncouthly dressed and phenomenally well-read young man named John Leyden, whom he introduced to Scott. It was the junction of two streams; and Leyden's, though the lesser, was by no means a mere tributary. Reared in the wildest recesses of Roxburghshire, gifted with a most phenomenal power of acquiring knowledge, he was at once a wild borderer and a great scholar. While Scott had been publishing German adaptations, he had, for three or four years past, been giving the public translations from the Greek, Latin, and northern tongues, printed in *The Edinburgh Magazine*. Like Scott, he was already an enthusiastic collector of border ballads, and possessed a first-hand knowledge of them far exceeding that of the Selkirk sheriff or any one else. Though the "Minstrelsy" had already been planned, and would have come out had Leyden never entered the arena, it might but for him have been a much smaller and far less epoch-making work. Ballantyne, who was to print it, told Leyden in 1800 that a single moderately sized volume ought to hold the materials; whereat his companion answered with some heat: "I have more than that in my head myself: we shall turn out three or four such volumes at least." The "Minstrelsy" proper eventually consisted of three volumes, with "Sir Tristrem" edited in a fourth; apparently the work was the realization of Leyden's conception well-nigh as much as of his friend's. Leyden walked over forty miles and back to find an



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old person who knew the last remainder of a ballad fragment; and much of the material in the essays of the "Minstrelsy," even when worded by Scott, must have been furnished by him. In spite of his eccentricities, the two men were devoted friends, ceasing to be frequent companions only when Leyden in 1803 sailed to India. In the year of his departure he wrote:

Oh Scott! with whom, in youth's serenest prime,  
I wove with careless hand the fairy rhyme,  
Bade chivalry's barbaric pomp return,  
And heroes wake from every mouldering urn!

and he recalls regretfully

The wild-wood walks by Esk's romantic shore,  
The circled hearth, which ne'er was wont to fail  
In cheerful joke, or legendary tale,  
Thy mind, whose fearless frankness nought could move,  
Thy friendship, like an elder brother's love.

The older and greater poet gave a corresponding tribute in "The Lord of the Isles" to his friend's "bright and brief career."

In the same year that Scott met Leyden, he also made the acquaintance of William Laidlaw, who became his lifelong friend and at once a subordinate and an equal. Laidlaw is a minor poet, briefly mentioned in some collections, and deserves only a very small niche in the circle. He was, however, of some assistance in preparing "The Minstrelsy." He became the means, also, of introducing his new friend in 1801 to another of many years' standing, a man far below Scott in early advantages and ultimate achievement, but in natural genius not always his inferior, the shepherd poet, James Hogg. Hogg had been brought up in the midst of poverty, ignorance, and superstition, which inevitably stunted his great natural powers, but which none the less peculiarly fitted him to understand the attitude of mind that in bygone ages had produced folk poetry. His mother, from whom he apparently derived his genius, had a remarkable memory filled with ballads handed down by oral tradition; and, although a transitory discipleship of Burns first made him write verse, he became eventually the poet of the folk ballads that had



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lulled his infancy. For years before 1800 he and William Laidlaw, on whose father's farm he was a hired laborer, had indulged in poetical bouts and competitions in the fields, like the pastoral shepherds of Vergil. Scott, visiting the Hoggs in their humble cottage, heard old ballads and very frank criticism from both mother and son, while preparing the third volume of his "Minstrely." Meanwhile the two earlier volumes of that work had kindled Hogg into a ballad poet. "I was not satisfied with many of the imitations of the ancients. I immediately chose a number of traditional facts, and set about imitating the different manners of the ancients myself." Several of these ballads, "The Death of Douglas," "Sir David Graeme" (which was an avowed imitation of "The Twa Corbies" in "The Minstrely"), and "Lord Derwent," are full of genuine poetry and Border atmosphere.

The lady to her window hied,  
That opened ower the banks o' Tyne;

or

Red blazed the beacon on Pownell;  
On Skiddaw there were three;  
The warder's horn, on muir and fell,  
Was heard continually.

It must be remembered that these poems, though called out by Scott's "Minstrely," were not written in imitation but as a reaction from it or correction for it. Even where they are not great they are genuine, the product of the Border soil. "His poetic faculty and imaginative creations," in the judgment of Professor Veitch, "were almost as thoroughly the growth of the district and circumstances in which he was born and bred, as the birk by the burn or the bracken in the glen."

In 1800 and 1801 Scott drew into the vortex of his labors two English antiquaries, whose characters had about as much similarity as light and darkness. Joseph Ritson was a half insane scholar whom the bland sheriff of Selkirkshire brought for a moment socially into his group, only to be expelled by his own impossible mannerisms and the teasing of Leyden. Ritson, who was, with all his faults, a

learned, and for his day, an unusually accurate scholar, proved a valuable aid to Scott though a very unwelcome guest to his wife. George Ellis was a London antiquary and charming man of the world, his connection with Scott, like that of Lamb with the Bristol authors, being mainly epistolary and yet exceedingly cordial. Their friendship continued unbroken until the death of Ellis in 1815; and their letters after 1801 are loaded with antiquarian detail. Leyden, when he came to London in 1803 on his way to India, was introduced by letter to Ellis, received much kindness at his hands, and left a record of it in a manuscript poem quoted by Lockhart praising "That kind squeyere Ellis" and ridiculing "that dwarf" Ritson.

A somewhat later addition to the group was Robert Jamieson, a poor young school teacher and also a minor poet and enthusiastic ballad collector. Being at work on a ballad collection of his own, he was a friend and fellow spirit, but not an active assistant in "The Minstrelsy." Scott in fact said: "I therefore, as far as the nature of my work permitted, sedulously avoided anticipating any of his materials." Various other antiquaries and authors of occasional stanzas had some social or literary connection; but though they showed the national spirit, they have no individual significance. Scott, Leyden, Hogg, Laidlaw, and Jamieson are all included in J. G. Wilson's "Poets and Poetry of Scotland," and may be considered as genuine children of the Muses. They formed to some degree a social group, which was the nucleus of a more far-reaching literary eddy just at the turn of the century.

Every one of these men, even the uneducated Hogg, was in some way an antiquarian and scholar, a gatherer and preserver of the literature of the past. This trait was not inspired by one man in all the others; it appeared in every one before he joined the group, though the influence and example of Scott naturally increased it. They stood as a body for the poetry of a traditional past, not a medieval Utopia, like that of "Christabel" and "The Eve of St. Agnes," but a national life that had been. From the depths of their hearts they would have cried about the wild life of the border ballads what their fellow countryman Carlyle said about the twelfth-century monastery: "It was a reality and is none." Nowhere else

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in Great Britain at that time was there so close a union of scholarly accuracy and wild romance, of history and poetry. It was this feeling that related them so closely to Ellis, who as a Londoner and the clever satirist of *The Anti-Jacobin*, was in many ways so far apart from them. His "Early English Metrical Romances" and Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel" both appeared in 1805 after four years of mutual correspondence. Ellis's book contained abstracts in prose of many old romances from the King Arthur and Charlemagne cycles: romances of Merlin, Guy of Warwick, Sir Bevis of Hamptoun, and others, and, like "The Minstrelsy," gave introductory historical essays. Inasmuch as "The Minstrelsy" was the direct child of Percy's "Reliques," J. O. Halliwell was asserting the kinship of Scott and the author of the "Metrical Romances" when he said: "Ellis, in fact, did for ancient romance what Percy had previously accomplished for early poetry." Scott with fraternal enthusiasm declared that Ellis "transferred all the playful fascinations of a humor, as delightful as it was uncommon, into the forgotten poetry of the ancient minstrels, and gave life and popularity to compositions which had till then been buried in the closet of the antiquary."

The next year Jamieson published a similar work, his "Popular Ballads and Songs, from Tradition, Manuscript, and scarce editions, with Translations of Similar Pieces from the Ancient Danish Language and a few Originals by the Editor." Though now hardly twenty-seven he had been at work on it for years. In 1800 he had first met Scott, learned of the projected "Minstrelsy," and found that that hitherto unsuspected work and his own "were nearly in an equal state of forwardness." His new friend later especially praised his discovery of the kinship between Scottish and Scandinavian legends, "a circumstance which no antiquary had hitherto so much as suspected." Jamieson had a scholarly love for accuracy. His "True Thomas and the Queen of Elfland" is in archaic spelling and diction, in contrast to the same story adapted in Scott's "Thomas the Rhymer." And it was his ambition to give his Danish folk poetry "as nearly as possible in the exact state in which it grew amid the rocks of Norway, and in the valleys of Jutland."



More important than either of these works was "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," for which the credit must mainly go to Scott, but in which Leyden at least should be considered an extensive collaborator. Not counting the avowed imitations of Scott and his friends, it contained between seventy and eighty ballads, most of which were genuine folk poetry, and forty-three of which had never before been printed. Scott divided these into two classes, historical and romantic; a distinction generally adhered to by northern ballad scholars, and enunciated a third of a century later by the Scotch poet Motherwell. "The Historical Ballad relates events, which we either know actually to have taken place, or which, at least, making due allowance for the exaggerations of poetical tradition, we may readily conceive to have had some foundation in history." The romantic ballads are "intended to comprehend such legends as are current upon the border, relating to fictitious and marvellous adventures." The latter class, he tells us, "are much more extensively known among the peasantry of Scotland than the [historical] border raid ballads, the fame of which is in general confined to the mountains where they were originally composed." The romantic ballads connect on all sides with the general problems of folk poetry, with Percy's "Reliques," with similar poems in Denmark and other countries. They remind us that "The Minstrelsy" was only one great step in literary evolution moving on throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; that four years after the publishing of Scott's collection the yet more momentous one of Von Arnim, "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" appeared in Germany, and that eight years after that for far-away Serbia oral poetry current through centuries was first given out in print. The "historical ballads," though some of them had appeared in Percy and elsewhere, are much more local, with the smack of the soil in them at every turn. They are so numerous in "The Minstrelsy" and so rare in "The Reliques" that the general atmosphere of the two collections is markedly unlike, that of the later work far more adventurous, martial, and touched with daredevil humor. There is less pathos than in Percy, and far less of sentimentality, but instead border

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fighting, lifting of cattle, rescuing of imprisoned freebooters, wholesale robbery, and yet a rough but inflexible code of honor.

For I've luv'd naething in my life,  
I weel dare say it, but honesty,

declares the raider Johnie Armstrong. The legally trained editor of "The Minstrelsy," no doubt, smiled in reading how the ancient Sir Walter Scott was rebuked by his king for condemning a thief:

For, had everye honeste man his awin kye,  
A right pure\* clan thy name wad be.

A contemporary said that "The Minstrelsy" contained the material for a hundred romances; and it is easy to find in "Kempion" and "Tamlane" the Alice Brand story of "The Lady of the Lake," in "The Battle of Loudonhill" and "The Battle of Bothwellbridge" hints for "Old Mortality," in "The Laird of Laminton" ("Katherine Janfarie") the germ of "Lochinvar," and in "The Gay Goss Hawk" the story of James Hogg's "Mary Scott." As for the debt of later poems in spirit and language, it can hardly be overemphasized.

The modern imitations include verse by several negligible figures, among them the uninspiring names of Matt Lewis and Anna Seward; but we need consider only the five poems by Leyden and the seven by Scott. Both authors were by blood and tradition the children of the wild Border spirit. Leyden tells us that when the plaintive strain of Flodden

In early youth rose soft and sweet,  
My life-blood, through each throbbing vein  
With wild tumultuous passion beat.  
And oft, in fancied might, I trode  
The spear-strewn path to Fame's abode. . . .  
Rude border chiefs, of mighty name  
And iron soul, who sternly tore  
The blossoms from the tree of fame,  
And purpled deep their tints with gore,  
Rush from brown ruins scarred with age,  
That frown o'er haunted Hermitage.

\* poor

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Scott had the self-same mood:

And still I thought that shattered tower  
The mightiest work of human power,  
And marvelled as the aged hind  
With some strange tale bewitched my mind  
Of forayers, who with headlong force  
Down from that strength had spurred their horse,  
Their southern rapine to renew  
Far in the distant Cheviots blue,  
And, home returning, filled the hall  
With revel, wassail-rout, and brawl.  
Methought that still with trump and clang  
The gateway's broken arches rang;  
Methought grim features, seamed with scars,  
Glared through the window's rusty bars.

How could we expect Coleridge, Lamb, and Southey, reared in localities where there had been neither war nor garrisoned fortress for five hundred years, to write like these men, or even like the milder Hogg, brought up from infancy on tales of Ettrick Forest, "that scene of many a bloody conflict"? Morton says that the long dissertation on fairies in the second volume of "The Minstrelsy" was almost entirely the work of Leyden; and perhaps it was because his head was so full of this that his ballad imitations had even more of the supernatural than Scott's. His Lord Soulis and Keeldar are chiefs of the border, but also deal in magic of the wildest type. Instead of

the good steel sperthe,  
Full ten pound weight and more

of "The Eve of St. John," we learn of Soulis

No danger he fears, for a charm'd sword he wears;  
Of adderstone the hilt.

Scott's warriors all wear mortal armor, "shield, and jack, and acton"; but Leyden's Keeldar tells his wife:

My casque of sand, by a mermaid's hand,  
Was formed beneath the sea.



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Scott's poetry, especially "Cadyow Castle" and "The Eve of St. John," is more dramatic and on the whole better; yet one cannot help feeling that Leyden's belief in the unseen, like that of Hogg, had been less damped by contact with urban civilization. There is an admirable faith and vigor in his unearthly narratives, though they have neither Coleridge's music nor Browning's matter.

And many a weary night went by,  
As in the lonely cave he lay,  
And many a sun rolled through the sky,  
And poured its beams on Colonsay;  
And oft, beneath the silver moon,  
He heard afar the mermaid sing,  
And oft, to many a melting tune,  
The shell-formed lyres of ocean ring.

Scott's own ballads, like the collected ones, divide into historical and romantic (or supernatural) ones, the former class being represented by the death of Murray in "Cadyow Castle," the latter by the weird women of "Glenfinlas" and the ghostly lover in "The Eve of St. John." These two elements continue to alternate through Scott's later poetry, although the "fictitious and marvellous adventures" consistently preponderate over what "we may readily conceive to have had some foundation in history."

Besides his part in "The Minstrelsy," Leyden in 1801 published an edition of "The Complaynt of Scotland" with a scholarly preliminary dissertation, and in 1803 his longest original poem, "Scenes of Infancy." This was begun, and its general tone determined, some time before his meeting with Scott; and it was composed at intervals far apart. The result is a patchwork of moods. At times there is pronounced medieval romanticism, at times the mild eighteenth-century manner of Rogers and Goldsmith, whose couplet he uses.

Here oft in sweetest sounds is heard the chime  
Of bells unholy from the fairy clime;

but at other times we hear less poetical, even if "holier" music, such as this:

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Blest are the sons of life's sequestered vale:  
No storms of fate their humble heads assail.

It must be remembered that none of these Scotch writers had any hostility to Pope. They had the same reverence for him that they had for any great poet on whom a reasonable amount of antique dust had accumulated. They regarded him as a chivalrous man might regard a woman, a bright phenomenon to be admired and enjoyed but not copied, because belonging to a different world of experience. Perhaps also the more neo-classic passages were influenced by Campbell, whom Leyden had introduced to Scott, and afterwards quarreled with. The poem is loaded with details of the Border life and landscape. From the verse which Leyden wrote later in India that Scotch atmosphere has gone, his poetry, in the words of Shelley, taking on the color of the leaves under which he passed.

Two works of Scott which had originally been planned as parts of "The Minstrelsy" outgrew their intended vehicle and appeared in separate binding. These were his edition of the ancient "Sir Tristrem" and his "Lay of the Last Minstrel." By a division which may appear arbitrary but which we believe defensible, we shall separate the "Lay" from the following long romances. "Marmion" and "Rokeby" were written by a man already famous, becoming daily less and less part of a local circle, more and more a citizen of the great literary world, deriving steadily smaller and smaller help from the companions whom he overshadowed. The "Lay" was conceived by a man still comparatively obscure, and was probably more of a communal product than the others, written wholly by one man but evolved in the atmosphere of a group. Scott had evidently developed some mental dependence on Leyden, for in his verse argument with Heber he laments that

Leyden aids, alas! no more,  
My cause with many-linguaged lore.

The most famous passage in the "Lay,"

If thou wouldst view fair Melrose aright,

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has much likeness to one in "Scenes of Infancy," probably written earlier, and apparently "by the pale moonlight":

Deserted Melrose! oft with holy dread  
I trace thy ruins mouldering o'er the dead;  
While, as the fragments fall, wild fancy hears  
The solemn steps of old departed years. . . .  
Where pealing organs through the pillar'd fane  
Swell'd clear to heaven devotion's sweetest strain,  
The bird of midnight hoots\* with dreary tone,  
And sullen echoes through the cloisters moan.† . . .  
Ye mossy sculptures, on the roof emboss'd,  
Like wreathing icicles congeal'd by frost!  
Each branching window, and each fretted shrine,  
Which peasants still to fairy hands‡ assign.

There was probably no borrowing here; but there were two similar growths from a common soil of thought. As an evidence of the fundamental difference between the authors of the Scotch and Bristol eddies, we should remember that Tintern Abbey is as beautiful as Melrose, and was visited by most of the near-by poets; yet it called out no great verse from them. The "Lines" written near Tintern Abbey ignore the splendid ruin to talk of nature and psychology. Forty years later the magnificent remains of Furness Abbey merely reminded Wordsworth that

A soothing spirit follows in the way  
That Nature takes, her counter-work pursuing.

Other evidences occur of studies common to Leyden and Scott. The central incident of Canto II in the "Lay" is foreshadowed in Leyden's "Lord Soulis":

The black spae-book from his breast he took,  
Impressed with many a warlock spell:  
And the book it was wrote by Michael Scott,  
Who held in awe the fiends of hell.

\* Cf. "Lay," II, i, 14.

† Cf. "Lay," II, xvi, 3.

‡ Cf. "Lay," II, xi, 4.



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They buried it deep, where his bones they sleep,  
That mortal man might never it see:  
But Thomas did save it from the grave,  
When he returned from Faërie.

The third, fourth, and fifth cantos of the "Lay" are in the spirit of the "historical" ballads. There is no supernatural element but that of the goblin page, which is minor and handled in a very matter-of-fact mood. The theme is the rough martial life of the border, substantially as it actually occurred, the poetry of adventurous realism. The first and second cantos, and most of the sixth, unite the spirit of the "romantic" or supernatural ballad with influences from more learned poets of England. The awful and unearthly overweighs the tangible. The metre varies and grows consciously literary. The influence of "Christabel," which the author had heard recited, is obvious in the first canto; the second adds what was best in the Gothic tale of terror, with the genuine thrill that Ann Radcliffe had felt ten years before in Furness Abbey, and the imaginative medievalism of Tom Warton. There is some likeness between the opening of King Arthur's grave in the latter's poem and the opening of Michael Scott's.

There shall thine eye, with wild amaze,  
On his gigantic stature gaze;  
There shalt thou find the monarch laid,  
All in warrior weeds arrayed;  
Wearing in death his helmet crown,  
And weapons hугe of old renown.

Miss Mitford declared "The Grave of King Arthur" "an ode which I should, from internal evidence, have pronounced at once to have been written by Walter Scott"; and she found in it "the very ideas and imagery of the finest part of 'The Lay,' Deloraine's visit to Melrose." The songs and final scene of penitent pilgrims in Canto VI have little connection with the Border; but deal chiefly with magic, with Scandinavian legend, with medieval ritual, and the revived "Dies Irae." More good poetry occurs in the "Lay" than in any of Scott's other narratives; but it is a mosaic of styles rather

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than a harmonious work of art, the product of a mind that had not yet oriented itself toward the literary currents around it.

There is a common spirit in all these Scotch poets, great or little. It links the world-renowned Sir Walter with scores of his minor countrymen of whom the world hardly knew. It persists in the later romances and the Waverley novels. It appears in other Scotch writers of the period, Joanna Baillie, and later Allan Cunningham and William Motherwell. But more than that it is a temper which reaches backward and forward through the centuries among the greater number of Scotch writers. It may be roughly defined as the romance of real adventure, in contrast with the unromantic, unadventurous realism of Crabbe or the visionary, unworldly romanticism of Coleridge and Blake. Among the wild heights and eventful lives of the Scotch, romanticism and realism became identified as they could not among tamer landscapes and a more sedentary people. In one sense of the word Scotch literature has been romantic down through the centuries; but its romanticism was that of wild incident and adventure, not of

The light that never was on sea or land.

According to Professor Veitch, the interest of the ancient Scottish poem "Sir Tristrem" "lies entirely in story and incident, and the variations that may be played on the chord of illicit and adventurous love." "Action intensely felt and vividly portrayed, the strong sense of physical vigor and manliness as the ground and title of honorable place and property in the world," are among the chief elements in the ancient romances that during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries represented the literature of Scotland. With the exception of illicit love, these are precisely the qualities which mark the poetry and prose of Scott, and the verse of his minor friends. They are also the salient characteristics of the Scotch novelist Robert Stevenson nearly a century later. They can be traced in the pictured page of his countryman Carlyle, at once the arch-enemy of pseudo-romance and the most romantic of historians. Much in these northern poets that has been ascribed to the "romantic movement" is a racial trait, reaching forward and backward through centuries,

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and utterly unlike the poetry of Coleridge, Keats, Wordsworth, Blake, and even of Scott's avowed imitators below the Tweed. There was, perhaps, a new interest in landscape beauty which ran across the ancestral channel, merely coloring it without changing its course; but even this had made Thomson a poet in the height of the Augustan age.

There is another consideration, at once racial and geographical, in connection with this revival of ballad poetry. It is generally agreed among scholars that northern England and southern Scotland received a considerable infusion of Scandinavian blood from their Danish invaders. The literature of Denmark is richer in folk poetry than any other in Europe; and it was in this Border region marked by the infusion of Danish blood that most of the English and Scotch ballads were found. Moreover, as Jamieson first pointed out, there are many marked parallels between these ballads and those of Denmark. Both "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" and the original poems of the period represent a poetic tradition partly derived from Danish seed and developed by a people whose blood was probably part Danish and part Saxon. The result was a literature distinctly different from that of either the pure Anglo-Saxon or the Celt. A comparison of "Christabel" and "The Irish Melodies" with "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" shows a common spirit of the age striking across different racial, as well as personal, tendencies, with resulting likenesses but unlikenesses greater still. — "This Scandinavian population," says Professor Veitch, "has certainly left its impress on the unwritten compositions of the north of England and the Lowlands of Scotland, and through these now on the literature of our time. The Saxon had neither, as has been well said, 'the pathos which inspires the bardic songs of the vanquished Cymri, the exulting imagination which reigns in the sagas of the north, nor the dramatic life which animates everywhere the legendary tales that light up the dim beginnings of a people's history.' The Scandinavian genius, on the other hand, was essentially bardic. And it sung of action, of deeds of daring, and of battle. That intense ballad spirit, which loved and celebrated personal deeds, to the exclusion nearly of all else, through the middle period of



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Scottish history, and which was preëminently developed in the north of England, the Scandinavian area of settlement, and in the Lowlands of Scotland, seems to have been an outcome mainly of the Danish and Norwegian blood. The frame of the old ballad even, as well as its animating soul, was a legacy of the ardour, the life, and the idiosyncrasy of the Northmen who left their descendants in our glens. And several of the refrains which have come down to us through the years, and from what we suppose are our Scottish ancestors, are really runes that were chanted long ago by the bards of the sea-lords from Scandinavia, when they sung of loyalty to hero and successful chief."

It was natural that the new revival of Scotch literature should originate near the Border. Historically, says Professor Veitch, the Tweed has been the heart of the Lowlands, "so far at least as strong bold action, the gradual growth of history, tradition, legend, the continuous flow of song, ballad, and music, wholly native, have moved the feelings and moulded the imagination, not only of the people of the district, but of the whole land of Scotland." They moved the feelings and molded the imagination of people other than the Scotch and utterly dissimilar to them. "I have been indebted to the North for more than I shall ever be able to acknowledge," wrote Wordsworth to Allan Cunningham. "Thomson, Mickle, Armstrong, Leyden, yourself, Irving (a poet in spirit), and I may add Sir Walter Scott were all Borderers."

Jane Porter, the author of "Scottish Chiefs," has given us a picture of intellectual life near the Tweed just before Leyden and Scott began writing. "Born on the border lands of Scotland, my mother, in an early widowhood, took her children thither, then almost infants: . . . But in Scotland, it is not the 'pastors and masters' only who educate the people; there is a spirit of wholesome knowledge in the country, pervading all ranks, which passes from one to the other like the atmosphere they breathe; and I may truly say, that I was hardly six years of age when I first heard the names of William Wallace and Robert Bruce:—not from gentlemen and ladies, readers of history; but from the maids in the nursery, and the serving-man in the kitchen: the one had their songs of 'Wallace

wight!' to lull my baby sister to sleep; and the other his tales of 'Bannockburn,' and 'Cambus-Kenneth,' to entertain my young brother." Not only the ballads but the later narrative poems of Scott were the voice of a people.

The various memorials of Wordsworth's tours in Scotland reveal more sympathy with romantic medievalism than is common in his poetry. It has often been remarked that the best wording of that romantic spirit which our language preserves is in his four lines, by no means characteristic of his general attitude:

Will no one tell me what she sings?  
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
And battles long ago.

It has not been noticed that these lines were written in Scotland amid the atmosphere of poetical antiquarianism general among her people.

The racial qualities of the Scotch group appear in the writings of fellow countrymen who were not personally in touch with them. The future novelist John Galt, at that time unacquainted with either Scott or his friends, declares that "long before the appearance of 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel,' I, then very young, in sending some trifle to the *Scot's Magazine*, mentioned my design of executing a series of historical ballads and dramas from Scottish history."

A curious deflection of the general spirit is found in the dramas of Joanna Baillie, most of which were published between 1798 and 1804, while "The Minstrelsy" and "The Lay" were rounding into shape. Miss Baillie at this time was not an acquaintance of Scott, though she later became his friend. Living the greater part of her life in London and doing all her literary work there, she remained firmly Scotch to the last, and never lost her northern accent. "Very much pleased we were with her," said Southey, "as good-natured, unaffected, and sensible a woman as I have ever seen." Like many a Scotch writer, she attempted to combine romantic incident and love of antiquity with a "cannie" regard for the realities of life; but in her case the result was unfortunate. Her plays are as medieval in date as the Waverley novels. "Constantine Paleologus" is in

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ancient Constantinople, "Basil" in sixteenth-century Italy, "Ethwald" among the Anglo-Saxons, "Orra" in fourteenth-century Germany, "The Dream" in fourteenth-century Switzerland, "The Martyr" in ancient Rome, "The Family Legend" in fifteenth-century Scotland. The stage directions include Gothic chambers, monasteries, and graveyards. In two plays flights occur through secret passageways; and a number of seemingly supernatural events are explained away on natural grounds according to Mrs. Radcliffe's excellent recipe. Osterloo's guilt is hinted to a monk in a vision, but the monk before dreaming had received information on the subject from a deathbed confession. Ethwald, like Macbeth, is shown by the Mystic Sisters a vision of himself as a crowned yet unhappy king; but this had been arranged by a noble to check Ethwald's ambition. Orra in the haunted castle hears the ghostly sound of the wild hunt approaching at midnight; but it is a device of the robbers who live there to keep prying intruders away. "The Family Legend" handles a wild Scotch tale of crime and revenge, told again in Campbell's "Glenara." All this sounds romantic and medieval and Gothic enough; yet the general effect is exactly the opposite, moral, dignified, and dull, so different is atmosphere from incident. Miss Baillie's whole system is built up on logic instead of imagination, and is poetically dead. She was greatly overpraised by her fellow countrymen, especially Scott and John Wilson; her reception in the southern kingdom does not appear to have been so much beyond her deserts. Like Wordsworth she advocated simple diction, but like him used many unlikelike inversions in her poetry.

Perhaps Miss Baillie would have written better on her native heather. Certainly her London home could not have been as inspiring to her as the city frequented by Leyden and Scott. "I don't wonder that any one residing in Edinburgh should write poetically," said Washington Irving; "I rambled about the bridges and on Calton height yesterday, in a perfect intoxication of the mind. I did not visit a single public building; but merely gazed and reveled on the romantic scenery around me." "It seemed as if the rock and castle assumed a new aspect every time I looked at them; and Arthur's



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seat was perfect witchcraft." The landscape of Scotland had its relation to her poetry.

Behind all these northern writers was the fervid national spirit, rendered more tense by the danger to their national ideals from social, industrial, and educational conquest. "Scotland and England sound like division, do what ye can," wrote Wordsworth to Scott in 1803. The author of "The Lay" felt keenly that

This is my own, my native land.

Leyden in his labors for "The Minstrelsy" "was equally interested by friendship for the editor, and by his own patriotic zeal for the honor of the Scottish borders." Burns only a few years before had hoped

That I for poor auld Scotland's sake  
Some usefu' plan or book could make,  
Or sing a sang at least.

At this time the Lake and Bristol authors were citizens of the world, critics of their nation. They were regarded, where they were known at all, as revolutionary versifiers rather than reformers in poetry. But the poetry of the northern writers was, and was felt to be, the national product of

Caledonia, stern and wild,  
Meet nurse for a poetic child.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Poets and Authors of the Lakes*

THE effect of landscape beauty on the susceptible minds of poets is never negligible, and was doubly strong around the year 1800. The great popularity of Cowper's "Task" with its graphic bits of rural scenery, the widely read treatises of William Gilpin on the picturesque in landscape, the influences of Burns and Rousseau and others, had made literary minds keenly observing and receptive. Through those enthusiastic days the poets of different regions might be expected, even more than usual, to take on, in Shelley's words, the color of "the very leaves under which they pass." The scenery of the Lake region, isolated, austere, and magnificent, was well calculated to inspire a poetry of little contemporary appeal but of deep and enduring power. It had never produced anything but the literature of nature. Gray's "Journal in the Lakes," written the year before Wordsworth was born, breathes of another world than that of contemporary midland writings. A journey here called out from Mrs. Radcliffe the genuine touch that we miss in her novels. William Gilpin had published two volumes on its "picturesqueness" in 1789. Before 1800 this region had produced practically no poetry for generations, Wordsworth having written nothing there but his immature "Evening Walk." After that date it became a nursery of poets and authors, and continued so to some extent throughout the nineteenth century. Even the bookish Southey, though he failed to realize his hopes later, cried out the day after his arrival: "Would that you could see these lakes and mountains! how wonderful they are! how awful in their beauty! All the poet-part of me will be fed and fostered here."

"The Lake School of Poetry" was a common expression among

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critics and reviewers in Wordsworth's day; but in truth that region had no school of poetry. There was a scattered body of authors; but there was limited social intercourse, hardly any accepted literary dogma or method. Such likenesses as existed were due to a common isolation or atmosphere, or way of life, rather than the result of a school. There had been more mutual constructive criticism, more social organization, more cross currents of influence around Bristol than there were in the Lake region.

— After 1803 Southey with his own family and Coleridge's wife and children lived at Keswick, and Wordsworth after 1799 in or near Grasmere fourteen miles to the southeast. A few miles further down — was the home of Charles Lloyd near Ambleside where he resided 1800-1815. Coleridge, "the Wandering Jew of literature," as someone contemptuously called him, came and went like a troubled spirit, and occasionally stayed with his family at Southey's, but more often with the Wordsworths. From 1800 to 1810 he spent about half his time fitfully in the Lake district; after that he lived in London or near the scenes of his faded hopes around Bristol. In 1807 two — young college men, Thomas De Quincey and John Wilson (Christopher North), drawn by their enthusiastic hero-worship for Wordsworth, settled in the region. De Quincey took the cottage at Grasmere recently vacated by Wordsworth; and although like his fellow opium-eater, Coleridge, he was sometimes a bird of passage, he lived — mostly in Westmoreland until 1820. Wilson, from about 1807 to 1815, made his home at Elleray near the shores of Lake Windermere, six or seven miles from Wordsworth and twenty-one from Southey. By actual measure distances were less than they had been around Bristol; but roads were worse, winter snows were deeper, and the leading men were older, so that the authors as a whole formed less of a social unit. Nevertheless, two years after coming to Keswick, Southey speaks of himself as enjoying "intimate intercourse" with Wordsworth and Coleridge. There is a certain likeness in the general alignment to that of 1798 when Wordsworth, Coleridge, and their satellites were around Nether Stowey, and Southey at Bristol or Westbury over thirty miles away.

— The phrase "The Lake Poets" is only a trifle less misleading than



"The Lake School." There was but one great poet whose main and most characteristic work was done in that region; and that was Wordsworth. The amount of verse which Coleridge produced there, good or bad, is pitifully small; and of this the second half of "Christabel," the "Ode on Dejection," and the "Hymn before Sunrise, in the Valley of Chamouni" are the only ones of much intrinsic value. Even these are none of them equal to the supreme work of earlier days. They are a saddening aftermath of the great visionary of Nether Stowey. The bulk of Southey's short poems were written before he came there; and several of the remainder were the drearily unlocalized, unindividualized work of the poet laureate. Of his five long epics, "Joan" and "Thalaba" were printed, and "Madoc" finished though not published by 1801. The fourth, "The Curse of Kehama," had been conceived in Lisbon that same year as "The Curse of Keradon," and some of it probably written before the author came to Keswick; its publication in 1810 was a belated harvest of a pre-Lake period. "Roderick" alone, of all these long narratives, was wholly the product of the Cumberland mountains.

Southey after 1803 was not so much a Lake poet as a Lake man of letters. In 1799 he wrote to Cottle: "I have lately made up my mind to undertake one great historical work, the History of Portugal"; and thus at the age of twenty-six the historian began to crowd out the poet. Four years later he said: "The more I read, the more do I find the necessity of going to old authors for information, and the sad ignorance and dishonesty of our boasted historians. If God do but give me life, and health, and eyesight, I will show how history should be written, and exhibit such a specimen of indefatigable honesty as the world has never yet seen." By 1807 we have: "My own lays are probably at an end. That portion of my time which I can afford to employ in labouring for fame is given to historical pursuits; and poetry will not procure for me anything more substantial. This motive alone would not, perhaps, wean me from an old calling, *if I were not grown more attached to the business of historical research,\** and more disposed to instruct and admonish mankind than to amuse them." Seeing that the first idea of

\* Italics ours.

"Roderick" had been conceived as early as 1805, his own lays were "at an end" after 1807, save for the finishing of those already in the works. At forty-one he acknowledged to a friend what he never acknowledged to the reviewers: "As a poet I know where I have fallen short. . . . As an historian I shall come nearer my mark. For thorough research, indeed, and range of materials, I do not believe that the History of Portugal will ever have been surpassed." His judgment was right. To-day Southey as biographer, historian, and man of letters completely overshadows the poet. The negative merits of these prose works have always been acknowledged, and their positive virtues are beginning to be recognized; but any detailed discussion of them lies outside of our present field.

—More important for us is the fact that Southey, both as poet and scholar, introduced a minor new current into English verse, that of Spanish medievalism. The "Return to the Middle Ages," like the "Return to Nature," took on many forms and drew from many fields. In general these traditions began at first hand, the fruit of experience rather than mere fancy, to a much greater degree than has usually been supposed. Mallet, who started the long wave of Norse medievalism followed by Gray, had been Professor of Belles Lettres in the Royal University at Copenhagen. The German medieval tradition derived from German poets, Goethe's "Goetz," Schiller's "Robbers," and their imitators. The tradition of medieval France developed very late, for lack of antiquarian interest among French *litterati* to kindle the English. The romantic interest in the medieval Orient was ignited from the Oriental travels of Byron. It was not until he and Shelley and Landor had explored Italy that English authors wrote much of the Italian Middle Ages. Southey made a short trip to Spain and Portugal in 1796, and a much longer journey at the turn of the century, before the end of which he was "almost as well acquainted with Portuguese literature, as with that of my own country." He was the first man who made the past of the Iberian peninsula an important factor in modern English poetry. Several of his short poems, of which "Queen Orraca" (1803) is the best, are straggling evidences of his interest; a much greater is the last, and perhaps the best, of his epics, the story of that ill-fated



king whose lust brought the Moors into Spain. This poem came after Wellington's campaign had turned all eyes toward the Peninsula; and by one of those spontaneous reactions which occur simultaneously in different minds, three poets, all in correspondence, yet all apparently starting independently, were at work on this same theme at the same time, Southey, Walter Scott, and W. S. Landor.

Southey's prose, including translations and adaptations, probably did more to form the Spanish current than his poems. His "Letters from Spain and Portugal," published 1797, are travel diaries of his first journey. His "Chronicle of the Cid" (1808) is a mosaic of different Spanish sources rather than a translation, but is exceedingly readable and took well with the public. The following typical passage from it makes one think of "Ivanhoe": "Each bent down with his face to the saddle-bow, and gave his horse the spur. And they met all six with such a shock, that they who looked on expected to see them all fall dead. Pero Bermudez and Ferrando Gonzalez encountered, and the shield of Pero Bermudez was pierced, but the spear passed through on one side, and hurt him not, and brake in two places; and he sat firm in his seat. One blow he received, but he gave another; he drove his lance through Ferrando's shield, at his breast, so that nothing availed him. Ferrando's breastplate was threefold; two plates the spear went clean through, and drove the third in before it, with the *velmez* and the shirt, into the breast, near his heart; . . . and the girth and the poitral of his horse burst, and he and the saddle went together over the horse's heels, and the spear in him, and all thought him dead."

Southey also translated the famous old "Amadis of Gaul," with its giants and wizards and parallelisms to the Arthurian cycle; and the Portuguese "Palmerin of England." "Oh, sweet and romantic Spain," cried Campbell in 1808; and after 1808 many other writers followed Southey in this picturesque new field. There were Scott's "Vision of Don Roderick," Landor's "Count Julian," Byron's first canto of "Childe Harold" and "Very Mournful Ballad of Alhama"; the Spanish poems of Mrs. Hemans; and the "Ancient Spanish Ballads" of Lockhart; to say nothing of those minor fry who flock around a good literary opening like vultures around a carcass.



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As an antiquarian and scholar Southey felt an affinity for Scott which was absolutely lacking in Wordsworth. We have all heard what the latter wrote to Scott about "Marmion": "I think your end has been attained. That it is not the end which I should wish you to propose to yourself, you will be aware." But Southey said, "I am not willing to admit that some of the situations in the Lay and Marmion *can* be outdone"; and earlier, before they had met, in connection with "Amadis" wrote of Scott, "he is a man whose taste accords with mine."

Southey at the age of thirty-nine speaks of "a sort of autumnal or evening tone of mind, coming upon me a little earlier than it does upon most men"; and something of that "evening tone" is found in his later poems, both long and short. The humor so obvious during his Bristol period is almost entirely gone; so is the influence of Gothic melodrama. In politics the revolutionary note is changed to its opposite, but in poetry it is dropped altogether. "I am no more ashamed of having been a republican," he told Crabb Robinson, "than I am of having been a child."

Another effect of his lonely life at Keswick, where "from November till June not a soul do we see,—except, perhaps, Wordsworth, once or twice during the time," was to make him fall back more and more upon books as his only companions. His library at his death comprised some 14,000 volumes, many of them rare and costly. Perhaps this influence was not good for a man always too much of a bookworm; yet one of the noblest poems he ever wrote,

"My days among the dead are past,"

grew out of it; and that in turn is little more than a versification of a letter to Coleridge: "Talk of the happiness of getting a great prize in the lottery! What is that to the opening a box of books! The joy upon lifting up the cover, must be something like what we shall feel when Peter the Porter opens the door upstairs, and says, Please to walk in, sir. . . . It will be a great delight to me in the next world, to take a fly and visit these old worthies, who are my only society here, and to tell them, what excellent company I found them here at the Lakes of Cumberland, two centuries after they had been dead

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and turned to dust. In plain truth, I exist more among the dead than the living, and think more about them, and, perhaps, feel more about them." Any experience felt as deeply as that may become poetry in its kind, may introduce us to that

One great society alone on earth:  
The noble Living and the noble Dead.

We cannot believe Southey so much more unwise than our modern realists because he filled his brain with the distilled quintessence of a dead sage's mind rather than with the unassorted garbage of a living prostitute's.

When we consider the vast arc of thought and knowledge subtended by Southey's mind, the purity and pliability of his style, we cannot help asking, Why does this man after all remain only a second-rate prose writer and a third-rate poet? One reason must have been the economic pressure under which he lived. Wordsworth hardly earned a dollar during his life. Southey from early manhood had the total support for his own family as well as Lovell's widow, and partial support for that of Coleridge, in the words of Wordsworth, "a little world dependent upon his industry." "Drudge, drudge, drudge," he groans. "Do you know Quarles's emblem of the soul that tries to fly, but is chained by the leg to earth?" Want and suffering may produce great poetry; merciless routine kills it. But back of that there were fundamental weaknesses in his own nature, one of which was his fatal overproductivity. "The more I write," he says, "the more I have to write. I have a Helicon kind of dropsy upon me, and *crescit indulgens sibi*." Could all his miscellaneous articles be collected, he would, says his son, "unquestionably be found to have been one of the most voluminous writers of any age or of any country." Where one brain has so many children, they are all apt to be anemic. At bottom, above all, he was probably a man of talent trying to play the rôle of genius. Yet, when we consider the far-reaching effect of his writings and research, who can question the fact that our literature is richer because he lived?

The story of Coleridge during this period is the story of a soul's tragedy, of "Hesperus that led the starry host" sinking in an opium

night. De Quincey, who was on the ground and saw, although he cannot always be trusted, tells us: "The fine saying of Addison is familiar to most readers,—that Babylon in ruins is not so affecting a spectacle, or so solemn, as a human mind overthrown by lunacy. How much more awful, then, when a mind so regal as that of Coleridge is overthrown, or threatened with overthrow, not by a visitation of Providence, but by the treachery of its own will, and the conspiracy, as it were, of himself against himself!" "But, apparently, he was not happy; opium, was it, or what was it, that poisoned all natural pleasure at its sources? He burrowed continually deeper into scholastic subtleties and metaphysical abstractions . . . At two or four o'clock in the afternoon he would make his first appearance. Through the silence of the night, when all other lights had disappeared, in the quiet cottages of Grasmere, *his* lamp might be seen invariably by the belated traveler, as he descended the long steep from Dunmailraise; and at seven or eight o'clock in the morning, when man was going forth to his labor, this insulated son of reverie was retiring to bed." Coleridge was only thirty-seven when Wordsworth wrote his epitaph as a creative intellect: "I give it to you as my deliberate opinion, formed upon proofs which have been strengthening for years, that he neither will nor can execute anything of important benefit either to himself, his family, or mankind. Neither his talents nor his genius—mighty as they are—nor his vast information will avail him anything. They are all frustrated by a derangement in his intellectual and moral constitution." A "poet of the Lakes" indeed! "Even the finest spring day does not tempt him to seek the fresh air," Dorothy tells us; "and this beautiful valley seems a blank to him." It was probably a great mistake that a man so connatally unhealthy ever took up his residence in the damp Lake region. "We would not on any account that he should fix himself in this rainy part of England," wrote Wordsworth prophetically in 1804. During a few months he edited his abortive periodical *The Friend*, the most unpunctual magazine that ever offended subscribers; but for the most part he haunted that literary arena like a ghost, deedless, heedless, and unheeded. For two years or so, it is



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true, the first of his Cumberland residence, he was thrilled occasionally by the grandeur of the environing landscape. He heard how

Ancient Skiddaw, stern and proud,  
In sullen majesty replying,  
Thus spake from out his helm of cloud.

He began the second part of "Christabel" with a glance over

Langdale Pike and Witch's Lair,  
And Dungeon-ghyll so foully rent.

In his "Hymn Before Sunrise, in the Valley of Chamouni," the description of Mont Blanc, which he had never seen, may have owed something to the Cumberland mountains around him. Certainly it has many likenesses to Wordsworth's earlier description of a neighboring height:

This Peak, so high,  
Above us, and so distant in its height,  
Is visible; and often seems to send  
Its own deep quiet to restore our hearts.  
The meteors make of it a favorite haunt:  
The star of Jove, so beautiful and large  
In the mid heavens, is never half so fair  
As when he shines above it.

Also Coleridge may have drawn his Alpine

pine-groves with your soft and soul-like sounds

from the Westmoreland scene which made Wordsworth write

The fir-grove murmurs with a sea-like sound.

All this, however, was a mere passing ripple. In 1802 he wrote to Southey: "All my poetic genius . . . is gone, and I have been fool enough to suffer deeply in my mind, regretting the loss." In that same year he composed the last of his great poems, the "Ode on Dejection," no product of landscape beauty but the wail of the opium-eater's despair.

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A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,  
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,  
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,  
In word, or sigh, or tear.

But now afflictions bow me down to earth;  
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth,  
But oh! each visitation  
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,  
My shaping spirit of Imagination.

*Fuit Troia; fuit poeta.*

The minor authors of the Lake region may be dismissed briefly. On Charles Lloyd much of the time there rested a mental cloud fully as terrible in its different way, as that overshadowing Coleridge. The other Lakers visited him as friends; but seem to have had little in common with him in literary taste or activities. His preferences were developing along French and neo-classic lines with which Wordsworth and Southey were not in sympathy. Hartley Coleridge remembered "dear Charles Lloyd reading Pope's 'Translation of Statius' in the little drawing room at Old Brathay. . . . Lloyd appreciated Pope as rightly as any man I ever knew, which I ascribe partly to his intelligent enjoyment of French writers." It was Southey who said of French that "poetry of the higher order is as impossible in that language as it is in Chinese." Lloyd like Cowper believed himself the object of divine wrath, and perhaps like Cowper turned to translation as a mental diversion. At any rate his only published work during this period was a three-volume translation of Alfieri's plays in 1815; and he also translated, but never printed, about half of Ovid's "Metamorphoses." He produced no original poetry in the Lake region; and his version of Alfieri, a pronounced neo-classic dramatist, was far enough from belonging to the same school as "The Excursion." In the year in which it appeared Wordsworth declared: "It is unaccountable to me how men could ever proceed, as Racine (and Alfieri I believe) used to do, first writing their plays in prose, and afterwards turning them into verse. It may answer with so slavish a language and so enslaved

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a taste as the French have." Curiously enough, all the poetical reminiscences of Lloyd's Westmoreland life turn up years later in his "Desultory Thoughts in London." To that volume is prefixed a suggestive quotation from Rousseau: "Si je veux peindre le printemps, il faut que je sois en hyver; si je veux decrire un beau paysage, il faut que je sois dans les murs"; and "in this city's vast receptacle," amid "Its countless eyes, its multitudinous will," the poet, partially recovered in mental health, wrote some four hundred lines on the beauty of his Westmoreland home and the neighboring lakes.

I had a cottage in a Paradise,  
he tells us.

The Pyracanthus with its glossy green,  
And scarlet berries; and, as yet unsung,  
The jasmine white and yellow, deck'd this scene;  
And o'er our little porch tenacious clung,  
And round each window, (while beneath them seen  
Moss roses peeped, like birds, in nests, when young,  
From beds of leaves,) with red and purple flower  
From thread-like stem, the pensile virgin's bower. . . .

Dreams afterwards I dream'd, and this the place  
To which their consummation evermore  
I did refer. There is a mountain grace,  
A grace peculiar, which I ne'er before,  
Or since, beheld, in its romantic face:  
In cove of mighty hills, amid the roar  
Of unseen cataracts, whose voice you hear,  
It stands!—meet haunt for visionary fear!

Reverent and enthusiastic allusions to Wordsworth occur several times in this poem.

De Quincey, though a Lake resident for over a decade, was not a Lake author. All his literary work was done subsequently in London and Edinburgh. Many years later, however, through his articles published in Tait's *Edinburgh Magazine*, he became the



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historian of the literary life *quorum pars magna fuit*. He had come to Westmoreland as an adorer of Wordsworth, with

all the sweet and sudden passion of youth  
Toward greatness in its elder.

After a few years his attitude became more critical and qualified; partly because he found his idol in some ways very human, still more because his own use of narcotics was gradually deadening in him the generous power to appreciate nobleness. His literary reminiscences are a medley of keen analysis, noble prose, wanton inaccuracy, and petty or spiteful gossip. In spite of their defects, due mainly, it is probable, to the depraving laudanum cup, they form a highly readable addition to the literature of the Lakes.

John Wilson (later the Christopher North of magazine fame) was a full-blooded young Scotchman with a hero-worship that his countryman Carlyle would have admired. Before going to Oxford he had read Wordsworth's poems with delight and written to tell the author so. "He had been more than a year in this neighborhood," writes Dorothy, "before he could resolve to call upon my brother—this from modesty, and a fear of intruding upon him—but since that time we have had frequent intercourse with him, and are all most affectionately attached to him. He has the utmost reverence for my brother, and has no delight superior to that of conversing with him; and he has often said that he is indebted to him for preserving the best part of his nature." Wilson was at this time rich in money, brains, and physical vigor, and consequently rather lazy for lack of any spur. He published two mediocre poems as a result of leisure among the Lakes, "The Isle of Palms" in the middle of his residence there, and "The City of the Plague" at its close. The first is a pleasant but rather lax narrative poem, in which two lovers are wrecked on a desert island and so forced unwillingly into Rousseau's life of primeval nature, to their great advantage. The influence of the earlier and more obvious elements in Wordsworth is plain. The second is a rambling blank verse drama describing the Great Plague in London with horrors that are none the less "Gothic"

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because they very probably occurred,—“out-Germanizing the Germans,” as Southey put it.

Oh! ours were dreadful orgies!—At still midnight  
We sallied out, in mimic grave-clothes clad,  
Aping the dead, and in some churchyard danced  
A dance that ofttimes had a mortal close. . . .  
Or in a hearse we sat, which one did drive  
In masquerade habiliments of death.

The play would hardly be considered belonging to the same school as either “Roderick” or “Michael.” One detail, however, connects it with the Lake literature, when the hero amid his own danger rejoices in believing that his betrothed is safe at her home far away among the Westmoreland lakes.

William Hazlitt, “a person for whom I never had any love,” says Wordsworth, “but with whom I had for a short time a good deal of intimacy,” made a short tour in the Lakes, painted some pictures there, and is said by De Quincey to have proposed to Dorothy Wordsworth. He was, far more truly than Coleridge, “the Wandering Jew of literature,” his great ability connecting him with many literary camps, and his repellent personality making him welcome in none. Neither he nor Lamb was a Lake author, though Lamb also visited his old friends.

As we have said before, the one great “Lake poet” was Wordsworth. For him alone this was the region of his birth, of his early training, of those transcendent visions that “The Prelude” records. Southey in 1803 became a Lake poet instead of a Welsh one, because a prospective landlord in Wales proved obdurate about repairing the kitchen; Wordsworth came here like a homing bird, not through chance but through mental affinity. Southey admired him, Coleridge inspired him, Wilson, and for a time De Quincey, knelt before him as their high priest of literature; but he and his poetry stand essentially alone. In 1812, when his best work was done, he mentioned “an utter inability on my part to associate with any class or body of literary men, and thus subject myself to the necessity of sacrificing my own judgment and of lending even indirectly countenance or support to principles,—either of taste,

politics, morals or religion,—which I disapprove.” His interest in contemporary moral and political problems was keen; but his letters are full of evidence that he deliberately insulated himself from the more popular currents of contemporary literature. In 1814 he warned Gillies against Byron as “a bad writer.” “I know little of *Blackwood’s Magazine*, and wish to know less,” he wrote, though *Blackwood’s* favored his poetry. As for the hostile *Edinburgh Review*, Dorothy writes that her brother “will not suffer it to come into his house, as you know; but we females have.” “Except now and then, when Southey accommodates me, I see no new books whatever.” “On *new* books I have not spent five shillings for the last five years.” “The only *modern* books that I read are those of travels, or such as relate to matters of fact,—and the only modern books that I care for.”

— He has been called a “romantic poet” and a part of “the romantic movement.” He was inevitably touched occasionally by the spirit of his age; but he neither belonged to it nor moved with it. “It is entirely impossible that any man can understand Milton, and fail to perceive that Wordsworth is a poet of the same class and of equal powers.” So wrote Southey, the year after “The Excursion”; and whatever we may think of the “equal powers” we shall find room for thought in the classification. Southey was not the only contemporary to notice it. Barry Cornwall declared that “Wordsworth’s prototype was Milton.” The sonnets of Wordsworth in their ethical vigor are Milronic, not at all in the plaintive vein of Bowles, whose influence had probably evaporated during the eight years before the first of them was written. “In the cottage, Town-end, Grasmere, one afternoon in 1801, my sister read to me the Sonnets of Milton. I had long been well acquainted with them, but I was particularly struck on that occasion with the dignified simplicity and majestic harmony that runs through most of them. . . . I took fire, if I may be allowed to say so, and produced three Sonnets the same afternoon, the first I ever wrote except an irregular one at school.” This is the author’s declaration; and he who doubts it may read “Methought I saw the footsteps of a throne,” or “Two voices are there; one is of the sea.” De Quincey, not far from the time when



these verses were written, found a marked likeness between Wordsworth's face and a portrait of Milton.

In metre, also, despite the fact that Milton is remarkably sustained and Wordsworth remarkably uneven, there is more likeness than has usually been recognized. Wordsworth wrote more blank verse, and, after the chaff is eliminated, more good blank verse, than any other poet of the romantic generation. Ward's "English Poets" quoted more lines from him in this metre than from Shelley, and three times as many as from any other poet of the age. He had not Milton's ear and technique; but he had at times a remarkable likeness in thought and inspiration.

The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,  
Was of a mighty city—boldly say  
A wilderness of building, sinking far  
And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth,  
Far sinking into splendor—without end!  
Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,  
With alabaster domes, and silver spires,  
And blazing terrace upon terrace, high  
Uplifted; here, serene pavilions bright,  
In avenues disposed; there, towers begirt  
With battlements that on their restless fronts  
Bore stars—illumination of all gems!

Wordsworth had Milton's interest in great political crises, and the same sense of ethical responsibility, as shown in his "Ode to Duty." He sums up the teaching of his "White Doe of Rylstone" in Milton's language: "How insignificant a thing, for example, does personal prowess appear compared with *the fortitude of patience and heroic martyrdom*."\* His indifference toward Scott's feudal romances is not unlike that of the epic poet who felt no eagerness to describe

tilting furniture, emblazoned shields,  
Impresses quaint, caparisons and steeds,  
Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights  
At joust and tournament; then marshalled feast  
Served up in hall with sewers and seneschals.

\* Italics ours.

We are not contending that the Wordsworthian poems are as a whole closely like those of Milton. But we do believe that there was much similarity in the nature and ideals of the men, and that the writings of Wordsworth are as much like those of his great predecessor as could be reasonably expected in an age and environment so different.

Wordsworth is always called "the poet of nature"; but a Miltonic and ethical element often underlay his feeling for landscape beauty. "All just and solid pleasure in natural objects," he believed, "rests upon two pillars, God and Man." He loved nature as a lyric poet does language, partly for its own beauty, partly as a medium of expression, the language of God to men. In this respect he is far more akin to the Hebrew psalmist and to Milton than he is to our modern landscape poets, those heapers-up of beautiful details, who, in Wordsworth's judgment as well as Blake's,

are led to believe a lie  
When we see with, not through, the eye.

Many of his poems after 1800 are the joint children of Milton and Grasmere, showing the features sometimes of one parent, sometimes of the other, at times a blend of both. The Lake region was to him not merely a home but a sacred place, the only ground where he felt that his poetry could reach its full harvest. Here, walled round with seclusion and beauty, guarded from the pettiness and turmoil of life, he believed that he could realize a vision not like what Milton saw but like what Milton would have beheld in the nineteenth century. This hope is the theme of his fragmentary "Recluse," which is the key to his future plans, as "The Prelude" is the key to his past development. The one book of it written is entitled "Home at Grasmere." He tells how as a boy he returned here:

and sighing said,  
"What happy fortune were it here to live!"

And now 'tis mine, perchance for life, dear Vale,  
Beloved Grasmere

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nowhere else is found,  
Nowhere (or is it fancy?) can be found  
The one sensation that is here; 'tis here,  
Here as it found its way into my heart  
In childhood, here as it abides by day,  
By night, here only; or in chosen minds  
That take it with them hence, where'er they go.

'Tis, but I cannot name it, 'tis the sense  
Of majesty, and beauty, and repose,  
A blended holiness of earth and sky,  
Something that makes this individual spot,  
This small abiding-place of many men,  
A termination, and a last retreat,  
A center, come from wheresoe'er you will,  
A whole without dependence or defect,  
Made for itself, and happy in itself,  
Perfect contentment, Unity entire.

And as these lofty barriers break the force  
Of winds,—this deep Vale, as it doth in part  
Conceal us from the storm, so here abides  
A power and a protection for the mind.

Here, not as a world-weary neurotic or an effeminate beauty lover, but as a virile and epic poet, he gives up the martial themes which he apparently had cherished, to write on themes which he recognizes as utterly unlike "Paradise Lost," but which he considers equally Miltonic.

Then farewell to the Warrior's Schemes, farewell  
The forwardness of soul which looks that way  
Upon a less incitement than the Cause  
Of Liberty endangered, and farewell  
That other hope, long mine, the hope to fill  
The heroic trumpet with the Muse's breath!  
Yet in this peaceful Vale we will not spend  
Unheard-of days, though loving peaceful thought,  
A voice shall speak, and what will be the theme?



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Urania, I shall need  
Thy guidance, or a greater Muse, if such  
Descend to earth or dwell in highest heaven!  
For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink  
Deep—and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds  
To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.  
All strength,—all terror, single or in bands,  
That ever was put forth in personal form—  
Jehovah—with his thunder, and the choir  
Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones—  
I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not  
The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,  
Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out  
By help of dreams—can breed such fear and awe  
As fall upon us often when we look  
Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man—  
My haunt, and the main region of my song.

Paradise, and groves  
Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old  
Sought in the Atlantic Main—why should they be  
A history only of departed things,  
Or a mere fiction of what never was?  
For the discerning intellect of Man,  
When wedded to this goodly universe  
In love and holy passion, shall find these  
A simple produce of the common day.

It was the tragedy of Wordsworth's career that the physical element in poetical inspiration, the instinctive lyric stirring of the bird in its mating time, burned out in him early, while in Milton it endured late. This makes it harder to feel in the poems the likeness which there unquestionably was in the poets. Wordsworth also was experimenting in a new field, while Milton was following great models in an old one; and experiment is more favorable to knowledge than to art. Yet it is unquestionable that in "The Excursion" and the unfinished "Recluse" Wordsworth was trying to write a modern "Paradise Regained," in which Nature was the Saviour, a morbid

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attitude toward life was the defeated fiend, and Grasmere was Holy Land.

Such were the high hopes with which Wordsworth came to the Lakes. All previous experiences, including the passing "experiment" of the Stowey poems, were mere preliminary incidents in his eyes. Did he realize his dream? Unquestionably he wrote much great poetry there, the bulk of that by which he will endure. Unquestionably most of this poetry took on the color of his environment. Yet nearly all which was best was written in the first seven years, and after that for four decades, in the midst of the scenes which he had believed so inspiring, he gradually withered as poet and man. Such a life of retirement is admirably calculated to ripen thought already sown, but not to sow new seed, which fall thickest in the concourses of men. He reaped a plentiful first harvest, and after that for half a lifetime gleaned a barren field. During a few years, however, the greatest poet of his age found his greatest inspiration in the peaks and lakes and flowers around his home. After the Stowey "ballads" and even the "Lucy" lyrics of his German visit, the poems of his first year at Grasmere surround one at once with a more localized northern atmosphere. Two of them are among his best, "The Brothers" and "Michael." In the first a former Lake resident, coming back like the poet himself, once more

Saw mountains; saw the forms of sheep that grazed  
On verdant hills—with dwellings among trees,  
And shepherds clad in the same country gray  
Which he himself had worn.

Here we are no more among the peasants of Somerset, the Simon Lees thankful for any aid, the "man fullgrown" sobbing as he sells his last lamb when the parish refuses to help him. Instead here in the north

Year after year the old man still kept up  
A cheerful mind,—and buffeted with bond,  
Interest, and mortgages; at last he sank,  
And went into his grave before his time.

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These are the indomitable poor whom Wordsworth referred to in a letter as "now almost confined to the north of England."

Wordsworth as Wordsworth had many sides and sounded many keys. As the poet of Grasmere he is less complex. In the verse composed there the purely lyric note appears more rarely than in the products of Stowey, of Germany, and of the Highland tours. The poems tinged with medievalism between 1800 and 1814 are mostly evoked by other localities. "Hart-Leap Well," though written at Grasmere, was inspired by a Yorkshire scene passed in a recent trip. A Scotch tour called out the address to the ruins of Kilchurn castle,

The pride, the fury uncontrollable,  
Lost on the aërial heights of the Crusades.

"The Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle" was composed at Coleorton in Leicestershire. The first half of "The White Doe," the part most tinged with medieval color, was written at Stockton-upon-Tees in Durhamshire, the birthplace of the antiquary Ritson. We are by no means sure that the quiet home encouraged the best political verse. His most noble sonnets on national questions were mainly written during or just after the trip to London in 1802 and the Scotch tour of 1803. Thoughts of a "Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland" was composed at Coleorton. On the contrary, by Grasmere lake the poet says:

Be thankful, thou; for, if unholy deeds  
Ravage the world, tranquility is here.

The effect of the Westmoreland environment shows itself often in a vein of poetical but homely realism like that of Cowper and Burns, as in the poems on the daisy and the celandine. This is a study of the beautiful in the commonplace, and an almost aggressive reaction at times against the age's love of remote countries and centuries. At times the stern contour of the landscape and high spirit of the people, produce a very different vein, bare and dignified as the mountain tops themselves. This quality becomes epic in "Michael," and in "The Affliction of Margaret" shows how dignified realism can replace the peculiar spell of the supernatural.



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I look for ghosts; but none will force  
Their way to me: 'tis falsely said  
That there was ever intercourse  
Between the living and the dead. . . .  
My apprehensions come in crowds;  
I dread the rustling of the grass;  
The very shadows of the clouds  
Have power to shake me as they pass.

These words might be a photograph of life, and yet suggest the unseen better than all the unearthly wonders of "Kehama." Or again the retired life of "The Recluse" encourages an old tendency toward mystic philosophy, which appears in only a few poems, but those among the author's best,

High instincts before which our mortal nature  
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised,

and visionary moods in which an old leech-gatherer

did seem

Like one whom I had met with in a dream.

The pentameter line, in blank verse, sonnet, couplet, or stanza, is used more consistently for the Grasmere poems than for those written in Scotland, Somerset, Germany, or anywhere else outside of the Lakes. This fact is probably an index of a more grave and meditative mood under Helvellyn and Scafell, more stagnant when uninspired, more Hebraic under inspiration, the mood which De Quincey found in the poet's eyes following a tramp among the hills. "After a long day's toil in walking, I have seen them assume an appearance the most solemn and spiritual that it is possible for the human eye to wear. . . . It is a light that seems to come from depths below all depths." "One might imagine Ezekiel or Isaiah to have had such eyes," said Leigh Hunt.

Of the two most lengthy poems composed among the Lakes, "The Prelude" inevitably contains much which might have been written anywhere; but that "The Excursion" was the direct child of its environment was long ago pointed out by Lamb. "The dialogue

throughout is carried on in the very heart of the most romantic scenery which the poet's native hills could supply; and which, by the perpetual references made to it either in the way of illustration or for variety and pleasurable description's sake, is brought before us as we read. We breathe in the fresh air, as we do while reading Walton's *Complete Angler*; only the country about us is as much bolder than Walton's, as the thoughts and speculations, which form the matter of the poem, exceed the trifling pastime and low-pitched conversation of his humble fishermen." "It is," according to Professor Harper, "pre-eminently the poem of the Lake country, and in no other work of Wordsworth or anyone else has the life of a particular 'nook of English ground' been portrayed with more distinctness and poetic truth. There are dozens of passages the full force of which can be felt only by one who has lived in the vales and known some of their inhabitants of the old stock." One of the defects in "The Excursion" is that it is too full of local flavor, so that the fragments written long before south of Bristol do not harmonize with those composed north of Windermere. Also, as Vergil's voice is said to have made commonplace poetry appear noble, so the grandeur of Wordsworth's environment made trifling matters appear epic, with disastrous results on the poem, for when it is read apart from that extrinsic magic of environment it often proves flat as a libretto without the music.

It was Wordsworth's ambition to be a pastoral and meditative Milton. The *disjecta membra* of his bold plan are scattered through his works, now sublime, now jarring, now gravely unreadable. There was a hopeless contradiction in the basic plan; for epic poetry implies incident, and he was trying to write an epic poem glorifying eventless lives. Was there also a mistake in the form of life that he chose for himself, a life so one-sided, so isolated compared with that of Scott or Goethe, men who improved during the later years when he was barren? Probably not, for the eight or nine years of his great period have left more enduring work than the thirty of Scott. Every plant grows best according to the laws of its own being. Yet a life for many years amid much beautiful scenery but without daily attrition against new minds, a life, moreover, without the calm

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staying power of a regular calling, leaves little middle ground between inspiration and stagnation. When one went the other came. The great poet, says Professor Harper, reached his fortieth year and passed it, "with no quickening of soul, no renewal of youth, no broadening of sympathies, no acquisition of fresh intellectual interests." At forty-two he told a friend that he had no objection to leaving the Lake region, which twelve years earlier he had sought as poetry's hallowed ground. He himself believed his premature decline due to anxiety about his country's fate; Professor Harper ascribes it to the passionate intensity of his nature; yet Dante under both of these burdens wrote the world's grandest poem in middle age. All that is most noble and genuine in Wordsworth's poetry takes on new beauty when associated with the landscapes which evoked it, without which it might never have been; yet some may have passing regrets too as they gaze on the beautiful region where the greatest poet of his time blossomed—and withered.



## CHAPTER V

### *The Popular Supremacy of Scott, 1805-1812*

IN 1804 the poet Bowles wrote of the period as "a time so unfavorable to long poems." The following January, Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel" was published; and over 27,000 copies of it were printed in the next seven years, nearly 44,000 copies before 1830. Nor was it merely a best seller and eyed askance by the discerning, like Bloomfield's "Farmer's Boy"; it was on the table of the poetical and scholarly everywhere.

Considered from within, as a history of the poet's mind and daily life, the development of Scott's genius was peculiarly logical and unbroken; from folk ballad to original ballad, from this to ballad narrative. Considered from without, however, from the viewpoint of the reading public, there was a marked difference between Scott before 1805 and after that date. The early German publications had been so completely forgotten that Monk Lewis reprinted them supposing his edition the first. "The Minstrelsy" had sold well among scholars and Scotchmen, moderately elsewhere. "The work did not perhaps attract much notice beyond the more cultivated students of literature," says Lockhart, "until the Editor's own genius blazed out in full splendor in the Lay." Even the moderate amount of success which the collection enjoyed did not necessarily argue popularity for original verse by the compiler. Southey's "Amadis" and other Spanish adaptations apparently had about the same success as "The Minstrelsy"; but his own narrative poems were read by scores where the "Lay" was read by thousands. In 1804 Scott for the general reader was hardly a name; in 1805 he was a blazing meteor on the literary horizon. Rogers and Campbell had each won a single great popular triumph, but had been unable to follow it up.

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Scott, like Napoleon, passed from one popular victory to another. "Marmion" and "The Lady of the Lake" found an even better reception than the "Lay," and though "Rokeby" (1813) deservedly got more unfavorable criticism, there was no marked falling off in the sales. By this time, however, Byron was in the field; and Scott's poetical vein was worked out. His "Lord of the Isles" (1815) found fewer readers; and the popular reign of Scott in poetry was over.

While it lasted it was a reign indeed. People did not merely peruse his work, they took fire from it. "You know," Mrs. Wordsworth told her husband in 1813, "that Mr. Scott's verses are the delight of the times, and that thousands can repeat scores of pages." His description of the battle of Beal' an Duine encouraged the soldiers in the trenches of Torres Vedras. His noble character and affable address made him friends in all ranks. So great and so unfailing was his success that we are accustomed to think of this decade as an age of poetry readers, in marked contrast to the one just gone. This, however, was not the case, and the general literary market was very much like that of 1910 if we may trust Southey. In 1808, the year of "Marmion," he wrote to Ebenezer Elliott: "Poetry is the worst article in the market;—out of fifty volumes which may be published in the course of a year, not five pay the expense of publication: and this is a piece of knowledge which authors in general purchase dearly, for in most cases these volumes are printed at their risk." With all due allowance for Southey's wish to discourage an immature poet, we must remember that he was a professional reviewer, and knew whereof he spoke. In 1807 Constable paid a thousand guineas for "Marmion" without having seen a line of it; and Murray, to whom he had conceded part of the prize, wrote to him: "We both view it as honorable, profitable, and glorious to be concerned in the publication of a new poem by Walter Scott." The next year, as Dorothy Wordsworth tells us, Longman, who had vainly tried to get "Marmion," grudgingly consented to publish "The White Doe of Rylstone." "Longman has consented, in spite of the odium under which my brother labors as a poet, to give him one hundred guineas per thousand copies, *according to*

*the demand.*"\* The poem remained unprinted and under revision for seven years. None of Jane Austen's novels found a publisher before 1811, although three of the best of them were written earlier than "The Minstrelsy." During Scott's reign up to 1812 the only other poets to gain a firm hold on the public were Moore, Campbell, and Crabbe. His triumph was an index less of the age than of the author; and whatever we may think of his permanent rank we must grant him the power of contemporary appeal.

— Personally we believe that his success was deserved. He may occasionally have truckled to the public with a little manufactured sentimentalism or magic; but in the main the qualities which made him known are the virtues by which he endures. He was popular partly because he kept his finger on the pulse of his audience; but he did this, not through sordid commercialism, merely through a gentleman's desire to please. He would no more force an unwelcome stanza on his readers than he would force an unwelcome wine on his guest at dinner. For the same reason he wished to offend nobody's literary theories, and made friends with the old and the new school alike. He admired Pope and Ariosto both. He edited impartially the medieval "Sir Tristrem," and the works of Swift. His defence of what was new in his own verse, as given in the introductory epistles of "Marmion," is as diplomatic and ingratiating as the Prefaces of Wordsworth were tactless and blundering.

Cease then, my friend! a moment cease,  
And leave these classic tomes in peace!  
Of Roman and of Grecian lore  
Sure mortal brain can hold no more.  
These ancients, as Noll Bluff might say,  
"Were pretty fellows in their day,"  
But time and tide o'er all prevail—  
On Christmas eve a Christmas tale—  
Of wonder and of war—"Profane!  
What! leave the lofty Latian strain,  
Her stately prose, her verse's charms,  
To hear the clash of rusty arms;

\* Italics ours.



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In Fairy-land or Limbo lost,  
To jostle conjurer and ghost,  
Goblin and witch!"—Nay, Heber dear,  
Before you touch my charter, hear.

This is good poetry largely because it is the poetry of a perfect gentleman.

Scott was popular because of his novelty, but wherein did that novelty consist? Not in a return to the Middle Ages, for Home and Beattie among his countrymen, and Warton and Chatterton and half a dozen novelists among the English had already been there. Southey's "Madoc," published in the same year as "The Lay," was more medieval in date, and yet did not sell. Scott's work was new because it introduced genuineness and humanity into a field where they had before been lacking, because he gave a vivid picture of the life of a bygone people instead of negative scholarship and colorless literary conventions. His popular contemporaries in Germany, Uhland and Fouqué, like our own Longfellow, appealed to the love of a picturesquely conventional antiquity, and their once great vogue has gone the way of all things built on convention. Uhland's knights, in the biting words of Heine, were "leaden armor, stuffed with flowers." Brandes's comment on "The Magic Ring" is equally caustic and true: "The horses are the only creatures in the book whose psychology Fouqué has successfully mastered." It was a far cry from such literature to Scott's picture of Watt Tinlinn, or William of Deloraine, that "stout, moss-trooping Scot," or the picture of King James's army given in Canto V of "Marmion," or the guardroom scene in "The Lady of the Lake." His popular appeal was legitimate and noble, the appeal which always goes with a genuine, sympathizing, and not too inaccurate picture of life.

Scott was popular because of his virility. It is this very quality—that has made him underrated by the neurotic tendency in late nineteenth-century criticism, which would leave his poetry to boys because it is too healthy for men of the world. This quality in his own day increased a poetical vogue which began in the year of Austerlitz, decreased after Leipsic, and fell off markedly after Waterloo. The manly element in Wordsworth was precisely what

the public did not see; but in Scott it leaned out from every page, and cried to the families of those embattled against Napoleon:

Where's the coward that would not dare  
To fight for such a land!

— Scott was popular because he was a good story-teller. Could any man have a better claim on the enthusiasm of his audience? If the vision of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, and Shelley was higher, that of Scott was clearer; if he was less of an artist in cadences he was more of an artist in incidents; and it was partly by his art that he held his public.

There is general agreement as to the qualities of his verse and general disagreement as to its merit. All admit his vigor, his wholesomeness, his wealth of antiquarian color. All recognize his lack of delicate undertones in rhythm, character, and suggestive word. Something might be said for the epic force of his openings, which come much nearer the dignity of Homer than his rather trailing conclusions; something for the sweep and vigor of his battle scenes, unequaled in their kind among modern English poets. Still the fluctuations of his reputation can no longer be influenced by discoveries of critics where all lies on the surface, but must be left to changing taste. This much, however, can certainly be said for him: he combined a high degree of merit with a wide popular appeal better than any other poet between Dryden and Tennyson. Byron wrote worse poetry which had a greater vogue and better poetry which was less recognized, but could not ride so well the literary and the lucrative Pegasus at once. For a hundred and fifty years no other man forced so many of his contemporaries to read poetry that was at least reasonably poetical. Such an achievement may be a triumph in the realm of pedagogy more than in that of art; such a man may be rather a great amuser or literary leader than a great poet—we will not quarrel about words—the man was great and the achievement no less so. No ossified Hayleys, no lacrymose Charlotte Smiths, no crude purveyors of German melodrama fattened during his reign. He drew the masses of England up with him to his plateau, while Wordsworth and Coleridge soared lonely to the mountain

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peak. There is an instinct toward popularity which comes from vanity or greed, and that is destructive to literature. There is another instinct toward popularity which arises from sympathy and a desire for public service. That was the attitude of Scott, and at bottom, while it may not conduce to the most perfect art, it was no ignoble mood and could result in nothing but benefit to mankind. Even if it chained Scott's poetry to the earth, it gave him also the vigor of the soil. The epic element may be far inferior to Homer's, but it is there. The lyrics may fly nearer to the ground than Shelley's, but they fly on a sure wing. Nothing could be more untrue than the charge made by Byron in "English Bards" that Scott had sold his literary conscience for gain. The direct road to the highest literary development of which he was capable lay through popular applause; and the relative merits of his various works are in almost exact proportion to the welcome given them by his age.

And what was happening elsewhere in the world of letters during Scott's monarchy? We can hardly say that his triumph meant popular injustice to others, for, with the exception of Wordsworth, the great unpopular writers during this period were noticeably barren. Between 1805 and 1812 Coleridge wrote not a single poem of distinction, the little good work that he did in the Lakes having been composed earlier. Southey was beginning "Roderick" and finishing "The Curse of Kehama," which found as much favor as it deserved. Blake, who had earlier uttered some great, though none too lucid, lyrical outbursts, was sinking deeper and deeper into the abyss of unintelligibility, where occasional lines of inspiration glimmered like a miner's lamp. Jane Austen was not publishing, and apparently was doing little writing except that of revision. Both she and Blake were non-existent at this time in the eyes of the literary world. Even the inferior but more popular Rogers was indulging in the most unproductive period of his career. With Wordsworth the case was different. He always has been and always will be the poet of a few; yet a comparison of his success during these years with that of Scott is a study in the irony of history. He was in the prime and glory of his creative powers; he was, and probably



felt that he was, the greatest poet of the age; he was writing of rural scenery when the praise of it was a literary fad, so much so that Miss Mitford deplored "the prevailing cant upon those subjects." Yet the discerning criticised and the reading public ignored him. His fellow poet Southey called his great ode on immortality "a dark subject darkly handled"; and Jeffrey, discussing the 1807 volume, declared the ode "the most illegible and unintelligible part of the publication." Reviewing the same volume, Byron, then a mere boy, expressed what appears to have been the common opinion of those who knew Wordsworth at all: "We think these volumes display a genius worthy of higher pursuits, and regret that Mr. W. confines his muse to such trifling subjects. . . . Many, with inferior abilities, have acquired a loftier seat on Parnassus." Another stumbling-block to Wordsworth's popularity, wholly different from his "trifling subjects," is indicated by Byron some years later: "His performances since 'Lyrical Ballads' are miserably inadequate to the ability which lurks within him. . . . Who can understand him? . . . Jacob Behmen [Boehme], Swedenborg, and Joanna Southcote, are mere types of this arch-apostle of mystery and mysticism." Wordsworth in 1813, when the bulk of his best work had been before the public for some years, declared: "My literary employments bring me no emoluments, nor promise any." In this year Scott was preparing to build Abbotsford on the profits from his verse.

Between "The Lay" and "Marmion" and in the same year with Moore's "Melodies" and Crabbe's "Parish Register," Wordsworth published a large amount of his noblest poetry. Much of this, however, had been written some time before. To his public he seemed an eager but unsuccessful competitor with the popular favorites. One who follows the inner life of the poet finds in him also, as in Southey, Coleridge, Blake, and Austen, a comparatively barren period, as if his star paled too under the blaze of the northern meteor. This fact is best shown by a comparison of Wordsworth's poetical achievement during the eight years 1797-1804 with that during the eight following, 1805-1812, the period of Scott's unchallenged leadership. "The Excursion" belongs partly to both periods,

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partly to a time following 1812, and should weigh but little in the balance. Aside from this, and with "The Prelude" given its right niche in the earlier period, Wordsworth produced nearly three times as much poetry during the eight years before 1805 as during the eight years following. Moreover, the greatest poem of the 1807 volume, the ode on immortality, though finished in that year, was begun "two years at least" earlier. Also during this time Wordsworth in a number of poems showed the influence of Scott much more than either before or after. In metre and occasionally in medieval color the greater poet imitated the reigning favorite; in thought and purpose he reacted to the opposite extreme, emphasizing the triumph of man over himself, not the external battle or adventure. Wordsworth and Scott at this time were acquaintances, with much admiration for each other as men, but with none too much sympathy in literary taste.

Scott may have increased the enthusiasm of Wordsworth before the picture of Peele Castle,

Cased in the unfeeling armor of old time;

or may have suggested in the humbly realistic "Waggoner" the allusion to

that pile of stones

Heaped over brave King Dunmail's bones;

His who had once supreme command,

Last king of rocky Cumberland.

The influence appears unquestionably in "The Horn of Egremont Castle," and "The Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle," both founded on ancient Cumberland legends. In the latter the medieval minstrel gives the attitude of Scott in martial octosyllabics, and Wordsworth utters his own view in musing pentameters. In a prose comment the author "cannot conclude this note without adding a word upon the subject of those numerous and noble feudal Edifices, spoken of in the Poem, the ruins of some of which are, at this day, so great an ornament to that interesting country." The trail of antiquity is found most at length in "The White Doe of Rylstone," which inculcates a moral the opposite of Scott's, but in metre and

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descriptive passages is often reminiscent of him. Here, as in the "Lay," generations of fierce armored barons "are buried upright" or "uncoffined lie"; and among the leaders

An aged knight, to danger steeled

wears the helmet on his white locks. The fourth canto opens with a marked verbal likeness to the beginning of "Rokeby," which was written after "The White Doe" but published before it:

'Tis night: in silence looking down,  
The Moon, from cloudless ether, sees  
A Camp, and a beleaguered Town,  
And Castle, like a stately crown  
On the steep rocks of winding Tees.

Whether or not the relative barrenness of so many gifted contemporaries was increased by Scott's glory, no one can say. In each case, other causes could easily be pointed out. Nevertheless the great unpopular poetry of the age divides mainly into two waves: that of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Blake before 1805; that of Keats and Shelley after Byron's great vogue had begun to decline. From 1805 to 1818 while Scott and Byron in turn played

The grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme,

posterity will find more good verse among the favorites of their age than among the great ignored. Nor can we avoid feeling a note of bitterness in one of Wordsworth's letters of 1812, when Scott was at his height and Byron was about to rise higher still: "I had erroneously calculated upon the degree in which my writings were likely to suit the taste of the times." After all, every poet seeks in popular approval something nobler than applause, the confirmation of his own faith in his vision. If he fails to get that, however defiantly he may talk, there is danger that his faith in himself may waver; or, if he is too self-assured for this, he may lose faith in his power to make men understand him, a form of self-distrust as withering poetically as the other.

—It is time to consider some lesser figures among the favorites. During the reign of Scott there were three poets who were inferior



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to him in merit and popular appeal, but who approached him in both. In 1807 Tom Moore, that "abridgement of all that is pleasant in man," began his long series of "Irish Melodies," which sung themselves into everybody's heart. In the same year the veteran Crabbe, after a silence of two decades, reëntered the literary arena with his "Parish Register," four editions of which were called for within eighteen months. In 1809 Campbell published his "Gertrude of Wyoming," in company with several shorter poems, and found also an enthusiastic reception. "Whatever had been said of 'The Pleasures of Hope,' was repeated with increased emphasis in praise of 'Gertrude.' . . . The reception given to the poem in America was cordial and flattering." Mary Mitford, like thousands of other British ladies, found it "that most exquisite of all human productions." Perhaps it revived enthusiasm for the overworked metre which it used. At any rate, less than two years after its appearance, according to Miss Mitford, "Messieurs the reviewers are unanimous in their recommendation of the Spenser stanza"; and these demands of the reviewers were met a few months later by "Childe Harold." Campbell was the fellow countryman of Scott, and Moore and Crabbe were both favorites with him. There was a mutual sympathy among the popular favorites which argues a common element in their work. Different as their poems appear, they alike avoided the mysticism and brooding, dimly formulated thought of the great unpopular visionaries. They all, though in widely different ways, combined picturesqueness, lucidity, human life, and narrative incident; and while they spread the sails of imagination, they carried what seemed to John Bull a wholesome ballast of common sense.

Meanwhile James Montgomery, the poet of Sheffield, had a considerable, though minor vogue among readers more pious than literary. His "West Indies," 1810, which was widely read, poured righteous indignation on the slave trade, and contained some of the merits of the pure-hearted poet whom it imitated:

Lamented Cowper! in thy path I tread;  
O! that on me were thy meek spirit shed!  
The woes that wring my bosom once were thine;  
Be all thy virtues, all thy genius, mine.

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Less can be said in praise of his oversentimentalized "Wanderer of Switzerland" (1806), which laments in dialogue the subjugation of Tell's country by the French.

*Shepherd.* "Switzerland then gave thee birth?"  
*Wanderer.* "Ay—'twas Switzerland of yore;  
But, degraded spot of earth,  
Thou art Switzerland no more."

Montgomery was of Scotch blood and born in Ayrshire when Burns was a boy there. From 1805 to 1812 Crabbe was the only poet with any popularity who was not either Irish or Scotch. Montgomery, like the other, somewhat later poet of Sheffield, Ebenezer Elliott, is not among the giants; but we must remember in favor of these men that they wrote among much less encouraging surroundings than most of the great masters. Wordsworth in a discussion on national education declared that "Heaven and Hell are scarcely more different from each other than Sheffield and Manchester, etc., differ from the plains and valleys of Surrey, Essex, Cumberland, or Westmoreland."

The popular reign of Scott, if it did not assist, at least accompanied a considerable vogue for several of his minor countrymen. "The Sabbath," by James Grahame, a wholesome but rather uninspired poem of the Cowper type, which first appeared anonymously in 1804, ran through three editions in 1805, during the dawn of the great Sir Walter's reign. Southey, who admired it, said that it "had found its way from one end of Great Britain to the other." None of Joanna Baillie's plays had won much success on the stage before 1805; but in 1810 she achieved a genuine triumph on the boards of Edinburgh with her "Family Legend."

— In 1812 with "Childe Harold," Byron became the reigning favorite, and Scott very soon withdrew from the competition. "Rokeby" and "The Bridal of Triermain" were both published in January, 1813, after which date the author planned no long new poem. His "Lord of the Isles" and "Harold the Dauntless," though mainly written afterward, had been conceived before "Rokeby" appeared, and were evidently completed by a perfunctory effort.

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"Notwithstanding therefore, the eminent success of Byron, and the great chance of his taking the wind out of my sails, there was, I judged, a species of cowardice in desisting from the task which I had undertaken." Both sales and critical approval, though still great, were already declining, and the poetical supremacy of Scott was over.

The rise of Byron, however, was not the only reason why Scott abandoned rhyme. He had good judgment enough to realize that his poetical vein, which was a narrow one, was becoming exhausted. More than that, a swarm of imitators had made him eager to leave the old paths. "The present author," he said in 1830, "like Bobadil, had taught his trick of fence to a hundred gentlemen (and ladies), who could fence very nearly or quite as well as himself. For this there was no remedy; the harmony became tiresome and ordinary, and both the original inventor and his invention must have fallen into contempt if he had not found out another road to public favor." "Indeed, in most similar cases," remarked Scott very truly, "the inventors of such novelties have their reputation destroyed by their own imitators, as Actaeon fell under the fury of his own dogs."

We will not counteract the beneficent destructiveness of nature by naming all the "hundred gentlemen and ladies." A few examples will show how "both the original inventor and his invention must have fallen into contempt" had they remained long in such company. Among the "gentlemen," William Sotheby, "that itch of scribbling personified," as Byron called him, published a little before "Rokeby" his "Constance de Castile." It is a rhyming narrative in ten cantos, which represents "Marmion" translated from England to Spain and from good poetry to bad.

Throned in St. Andrew's holy walls,  
Edward each summoned warrior calls,  
Knight, banneret, and baron bold,  
Who of his realm high tenure hold.  
There, too, in pomp of priestly state,  
Albert, the mitred abbot, sate.

Among the "ladies" was Margaret Holford (Mrs. Hodson), whose "Wallace, or the Fight of Falkirk: A Metrical Romance" came



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close on the heels of "Marmion" like a jackal after a lion, and, according to Mary Mitford, "is said to have excited the jealousy of our great modern minstrel." Miss Holford also wrote a few ballads, and poured out her feminine admiration for Scott in lines on his "Lay." In some very astounding and unprophetic verses she could say:

Methinks, arrived at Fame's eternal dome,  
Already round my brow her leaves entwine;  
Smiling, I mark how Time's o'erwhelming gloom  
Steals silently o'er many a soul supine,  
And feel oblivion never can be mine.

One can see how a lesser man than Scott would not wish to be bracketed with her. Miss Mitford herself some years later became an eminent prose realist. At this time she was a hopelessly minor poetess, who also wrote imitations of Sir Walter in manner quite unlike "Our Village." For twenty years the "Harp of the North" was waked by Tom, Dick, and Harry,

How rude soe'er the hand  
That ventured o'er its magic maze to stray.

The competitors who drove Scott out of his field were not confined to the absurd, but included genuine poets. Byron himself in 1813 swung over to the "light horseman stanza" of the Border Minstrel, in which he varied from utter dissimilarity to obvious imitation. Rogers tried the same narrative metre the next year in "Jacqueline."

Meanwhile a note less borrowed perhaps but more closely kindred came from Scott's old friend and *protégé* James Hogg. Early disadvantages belated the harvest of his genius, which did not come until after he was forty. His "Mountain Bard" in 1807 had contained some good local color and grim humor, but had made no marked impression. In the year of "Rokeby" and "The Giaour" he published his one great poem, "The Queen's Wake"; and Hogg at his best here does not compare so unfavorably with Scott at his second best. Hogg was no mere imitator. He spoke truly, though with characteristic conceit, when he said: "Dear Sir Walter! Ye

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can never suppose that I belong to your School o' Chivalry! Ye are the king o' that school, but I'm the king o' the Mountain and Fairy School, which is a far higher ane nor yours." He was more akin to the Celtic dreamer and less to the Scandinavian Viking than his famous friend, yet enough like his great contemporary to make that proud though genial spirit feel crowded in his poetic domain and restless there.

Hogg has far worse lapses of taste than are ever found in "Marmion" or "Rokeby," and none of the epic sweep and dignity which Scott attained partially and fitfully; but the lesser man has the greater variety, the more strings to his harp. Of Border chivalry he can tell, not as well as the "Last Minstrel," but very respectably.

O, but the Harden lads were true,  
And bore them bravely in the broil!  
The doughty laird of wild Buccleugh  
Raged like a lion in the toil.

The supernatural of Hogg is much more crude at its worst than that of Scott, but more naïvely genuine at its best, as in "The Abbot M'Kinnon" when the dead saint whom the lustful abbot serves comes back to earth to drown the offender.

Then the old man arose and stood up on the prow,  
And fixed his dim eyes on the ocean below;  
And they heard him saying, "Oh, woe is me!  
But great as the sin must the sacrifice be."  
Oh, mild was his eye and his manner sublime,  
When he looked unto heaven, and said—"Now is the time."

The two most successful moods of Hogg are hardly found in Scott's verse. The first of these is the Ettrick Shepherd's sly humor mixed with *diablerie*, in which he betrays a slight affinity to "Tam O'Shanter." "The Witch of Fife" is a humble masterpiece in this vein.

They flew to the vaultis of merry Carlisle,  
Quhair they enterit free as ayr;  
And they drank and they drank of the bishopis wyne  
Quhill they culde drynk ne mair.

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The auld guidman he grew so crouse,  
He dancit on the mouldy ground,  
And he sang the bonniest sangs of Fyfe,  
And he tuzzlit the kerlyngs\* round.

A more realistic and satirical humor appears in his description of the competing bards, the greatest poets of ancient Scotland:

A simpler race you shall not see,  
Awkward and vain as men can be.

Hogg had no romantic illusions as to the character of the *genus irritabile*. But his best work of all is that of elvish, Celtic unrealism, as it comes pure from the wellspring in "Kilmeny":

They bore her far to a mountain green,  
To see what mortal never had seen;  
And they seated her high on a purple sward,  
And bade her heed what she saw and heard,  
And note the changes the spirits wrought,  
For now she lived in the land of thought.

"The Queen's Wake," like "The Canterbury Tales," encloses a series of recitals in a narrative framework. It makes no attempt to rival Chaucer in character analysis, but creates a picturesque panorama of Queen Mary's faction-torn court at Holyrood palace. The whole ends with a Parthian shot at contemporary criticism, for the prize is given to a lay which Hogg as well as most of his readers must have considered among the poorest.

'Twas party all, not minstrel worth,  
But honour of the south and north.

After 1813 Hogg, like his great brother poet, fell off markedly in power and subsequently in popularity; but unlike Scott, he did not know enough to quit fishing the empty pond. His later medieval romances, "Mador of the Moore" and "Queen Hynde," are spineless imitations, relieved only by a few touches of conscious—or unconscious—humor. The year of "Rokeby" and "The Queen's Wake" closed, not only the popular reign of Scott in verse but also

\* carlins, old hags.



## THE POPULAR SUPREMACY OF SCOTT

that of his countrymen, for Campbell by this time was almost dead as a poet. Many an edition of "Marmion" and "The Lady of the Lake," of "The Queen's Wake" and "The Pleasures of Hope" was yet to be issued; but the prestige of all the Scotch poets, great and little, Scott, Hogg, Campbell, Montgomery, Grahame, Joanna Baillie, had reached its meridian and was on the downward slope.

## CHAPTER VI

### *The London Society Poets: The Popular Supremacy of Byron, 1812-1820*

— ALL of the good poetry which we have discussed hitherto came from the provinces. It is time now to consider London. The flower of neo-classical literature from the Restoration to the death of Pope was mainly the literature of London authors, of men for whom, even when their permanent residence was not there, the great city was the Mecca of their hopes and ideals. They were Londoners moreover of the upper social strata. Sir George Etherege, Sir John Vanbrugh, Congreve, who wished to be forgotten as a dramatist and remembered only as a gentleman, were types of the Restoration comedian. It was as courtiers and men of affairs that Dryden, Addison, and Swift moved in metropolitan circles; the latter considered as tragedy a life of retirement that would have delighted Wordsworth. Pope, too feeble in body for the *salon* or the cabinet, was none the less the associate of *litterati* in high social standing, and Prior the genial companion of men much more important socially than himself. The peculiar quality of Augustan literature has been considered as the voice of a temporary spirit pervading all Great Britain; was it not rather to a considerable degree the voice of a permanent spirit, always to be found in a certain class of a certain region? The Augustan age can be partly, though of course not wholly, explained on the ground that other classes and districts were comparatively dumb; and the romantic generation on the ground that they passionately and eloquently found their voice. The districts of Bristol, Westmoreland, and the Border had never been genuinely neo-classic, they had simply been poetically barren. From the days of Cromwell down, the upper middle class, except when its writers became the

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*protégés* of noblemen, had been far less consistently imbued with the spirit of Boileau and Racine than the courtly wits of Holland House and Saint James. Where writers of humbler *status* did follow the Pope tradition, as in the case of Johnson and Goldsmith, they were usually denizens of London. Turning now from Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Scott, and their minor co-workers, all men of the middle class and of the provinces, one finds in the city and the social life which had produced Pope and Addison a century before, the spirit and tradition of the Queen Anne wits, mixed with much that was utterly foreign to their age, but surviving here late into the nineteenth century as it survived nowhere else.

Beginning about 1800 there gradually formed at London a little — knot of poets, who were on terms of close familiarity with each other, and who, though not by any means always of blue blood themselves, had the *entrée* of the best society. Whatever the rank of their ancestors, they themselves were finished men of the world, habitually frequenting homes and clubs where Keats was uninvited and Wordsworth a discordant note. Their attitude toward life was often colored by the atmosphere of clubs and the broad but shallow cosmopolitanism of high society. As a literary phenomenon, the chief mark of this group was the close union of romantic medievalism, Orientalism, and Wertherism with the most unadulterated type of the Pope tradition. Every member of it except Rogers and Luttrell wrote poetry that according to any possible definition would be called wildly romantic. Every member of it without exception wrote a considerable amount of verse in the most servile imitation of Augustan models. The bulk of this latter work as poetry deserved the neglect that it has met; but as an index of literary currents it has that human interest which it never had as literature.

The first to arrive on the field was Samuel Rogers, a wealthy and artistic young man of the upper middle class. Before 1793 he had made his home in the neighboring country at Newington Green, and while there had won nation-wide popularity with his "Pleasures of Memory." After 1793 he lived partly in London, wholly there after 1798, and soon became the friend of Charles James Fox, Lord Holland, and other prominent men.



In 1799 Thomas Moore journeyed to the same city, and, like Rogers, made it his home for years. His genial personality, rare musical powers, and Irish wit rendered him soon a popular favorite among people of rank, including Lord Moira; and his first volume was dedicated to the Prince of Wales. After his marriage in 1811 he settled his family at Sloperton Cottage, more than half way to Bristol and within two miles of the poet Bowles, whose warm friend he became; but he was still much in London society, and a Londoner in all his affiliations and feelings. In 1803, Thomas Campbell, already famous as the author of "The Pleasures of Hope," came down from Scotland, married, and took up his residence in Pimlico. A few months later he settled at Sydenham in Kent, where he lived for seventeen years; but was much in the metropolis, in contact with its writers and social leaders.

The greatest addition of all to this band was Lord Byron when he came back from his Mediterranean tour in 1812. Before that date he had neither had much personal intercourse with great poets, nor, according to Lord Holland, had he moved in the best society. He had already, however, shown his mental affinity for Moore, whose none too chaste "Poems by the Late Thomas Little," he tells us, "I knew by heart in 1803, being then in my fifteenth year." In 1812 he published the first two cantos of "Childe Harold," woke up one morning and found himself famous; and for the next three or four years he was the central figure of the London society poets as well as the lion of the hour. In 1816 he broke with his wife, was insulted in the streets of London, and left the city and the nation never to return. He still corresponded with Moore and Rogers; but henceforth new influences were at work on him.

A minor figure in this band—very minor as a poet though less so as a personality—was W. R. Spencer, a man like Byron of noble family. Byron, Moore, and he were the only three literary men in England who were members of Watier's, the fashionable dandies' club, where Beau Brummel, its perpetual president, was gambling his life away. Another lesser light, who blossomed into minor poetry late in life and after Byron's departure, was Henry Luttrell. Richard Sheridan, the aged dramatist and author, was also much in their

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company, although his writing days were past. Nor must we overlook Lord Holland, socially one of the leading figures and in literature negligible, but still an author. An eager student of Spanish writers, especially the dramatists, he translated a number of Spanish plays, in 1806 published a memoir of Lope de Vega, and in 1813 welcomed his fellow pro-Spaniard Southey to the great resources of his library.

Rogers appears to have been the personal magnet who drew these different particles together, as Coleridge did the Bristol Eddy, and Scott the northern one. Rogers, in spite of his caustic tongue, had an inborn ability not merely for getting acquainted, but also for making enduring friendships. He probably met Moore in 1805, and knew Spencer and Luttrell before that. As early as 1801 he and Lord Holland had dined with Campbell; and it was he who almost immediately after Byron's return from the East, introduced the wandering Childe to Lord Holland.

We have here a band of poets representing, if not a literary school, at least a distinct literary type. Aside from their late and rather illogical championship of Pope they built up no artistic theory; they were neither critics nor philosophers; but they showed in both their lives and their writings common elements lacking in all their great contemporaries. They represented a social "set," at times a distinct social group. This began somewhat after 1800, reached its maximum during the membership of Byron, and after that gradually disintegrated. Its two chief *rendezvous* were Holland House and the home of Rogers. A third, less important for us, was the residence of Lydia White, an enthusiastic spinster and entertainer of social lions, so enthusiastic that in her last days, with rouge on her cheeks and death in her heart, she entertained them still.

Macaulay in 1831 called Holland House "the favorite resort of wits and beauties, of painters and poets, of scholars, philosophers, and statesmen"; and as he found it then, it had been for a third of a century. Southey, who was there in 1813, describes a typical scene. "I dined on Sunday at Holland House, with some eighteen or twenty persons. Sharp was there, who introduced me with all due form to Rogers and to Sir James Mackintosh. . . . In the



evening Lord Byron came in." The great mansion, with its vast library, its magnificent dinners, its galaxy of intellectual stars, was an inspiration to the urban or cosmopolitan genius as Derwent and Skiddaw were to Wordsworth or Smailholm keep and the ruins of Hermitage castle to Scott. Unlike them, the literary inspiration which it gave was eighteenth century and conservative. Here lingered as tradition all that had been best in the days of Queen Anne. Addison had lived here after 1716 with his wife, the Countess of Warwick. Charles James Fox, the brilliant younger brother of Lord Holland, was a great admirer of Pope's "Eloisa," and of Voltaire's "Zaire." Lord Holland himself, according to Moore, "inclined to place Virgil and Racine in the very highest rank," and "gave the last lines of Denham's 'Cooper's Hill' as a specimen of perfect harmony in versification." It was natural that poets who dined here frequently, walked where Addison had walked, and discussed with their entertainers the beauties of Pope, should feel more sympathy with the neo-classic tradition than their brethren of the Quantock hills and Cumberland mountains.

In 1803 Rogers moved to a house in St. James's Place built and decorated under his own directions; and there he lived for over half a century. The building came to be the expression of the author's somewhat finical but genuinely artistic taste. A frieze copied from the Parthenon ran around the staircase; rare paintings, many of which are now in the National Gallery, and copies of antique sculpture adorned the walls. Like Holland House it was of a nature to favor neo-classic tastes. "This coördination in Rogers' house was perfect. The general impression was one of complete harmony, and that impression was confirmed by the effect of every detail. . . . It is the same in his poetry as it was in his home, in his manners as it was in his style of prose composition. 'Of nothing too much' was its motto." Walter Scott wrote to him of his home in 1820: "As you have made the most classical museum I can conceive, I have been attempting a Gothic." "His breakfast table was perfect in all respects," says Barry Cornwall; "and the company—where literature mixed with fashion and rank, each having a fair proportion—was always agreeable. And in the midst of all his hospitable



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glory was the little old pleasant man, not yet infirm, with his many anecdotes, and sub-acid words that gave flavor and pungency to the general talk." Here for years the witty and kind-hearted, though caustic-tongued poet kept something as near a literary *salon* as an unaided bachelor could be expected to offer. To breakfast with Rogers and to dine at Holland House was to enter the best literary society of the time.

Passing from Grasmere, or even Ashestiel, to the London society poets meant entering a new atmosphere. Moore's correspondence has occasional enthusiastic references to nature or to ancient Ireland; but these are exceedingly rare. His letters are largely made up of breakfasts, dinners, amiable chit-chat, and all the pleasures of a society man. We find a significant entry in his diary: "I said how well calculated the way in which Scott had been brought up was to make a writer of poetry and romance, as it combined all that knowledge of rural life and rural legends which is to be gained by living among the peasantry and joining in their sports, with all the advantages which an aristocratic education gives. I said that the want of this manly training showed itself in my poetry, which would perhaps have had a far more vigorous character if it had not been for the sort of *boudoir* education I had received." In 1807 he wrote to Miss Godfrey: "How go on Spenser [Spencer] and Rogers, and the rest of those agreeable rattles, who seem to think life such a treat that they can never get enough of it?" Spencer was a brilliant drawing-room entertainer, who delighted Madame de Staël with "his universality of conversation." Byron mentions "Moore, Campbell, Rogers, Spencer, as poets; and how many conversationists to be added to the galaxy of stars." Campbell was a somewhat more humble figure socially, yet in 1812 we find him "dancing a reel with royalty"; and a little later Hazlitt, in lecturing on the living poets, put him in the same "hot-pressed superfine-wove paper" school as Rogers. Their urban attitude appears in its most unattractive phase in Byron. In 1814 he wrote of the Ettrick shepherd: "The said Hogg is a strange being. . . . I think very highly of him, as a poet; but he, and half of these Scotch and Lake troubadours, are spoilt by living in little circles and petty societies. London and the world is the

only place to take the conceit out of a man." Some time later he alludes to Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Joanna Baillie, Bowles, Milman, Barry Cornwall, and apparently even Campbell; and says: "The pity of these men is, that they never lived either in *high life*, nor in *solitude*: there is no medium for the knowledge of the *busy* or the *still* world. . . . Now Moore and I, the one by circumstances, and the other by birth, happened to be free of the corporation, and to have entered into its pulses and passions, *quarum partes fuimus*. Both of us have learnt by this much which nothing else could have taught us." Only compare with this the utterance of Wordsworth: "It is an awful truth, that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world; among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society." Then he adds: "This is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God"; which is in odd contrast with what Moore wrote confidentially to his mother: "If I am to be poor, I had rather be a poor counsellor than a poor poet; for there is ridicule attached to the latter, which the former may escape." Is it any wonder that the London society poets championed Pope, and that Wordsworth depreciated him? The chasm was not wholly that between the age of Queen Anne and the age of George IV; it was also a permanent chasm between two different types of life and thought.

Rogers, the most catholic in his friendships though the most narrow in his poetical range, was after 1803 the lifelong friend of Wordsworth. Byron admired Coleridge's "Christabel," helped to get his "Remorse" acted, and praised Southey's "Roderick." In general, however, there was an instinctive hostility in literature, and at times in personal relations, between the London society poets and the "Lakers." Rogers apparently was no enthusiast about Coleridge. Byron, who evidently believed consistency a virtue unworthy of a peer, lashed the whole Lake *coterie* both in print and in correspondence. Apart from his slashing invective, each group is mentioned



with astonishing rareness in the correspondence of the other. Toward Scott, whose genial manliness adapted itself equally well to the backwoodsman and the lord, the Holland House authors were uniformly cordial; of the minor Scotch writers they naturally knew little.

Their work in poetry, as we have said, alternated between the florid Dr. Jekyll of wild romance and the wizened Mr. Hyde of neo-classic tradition. The latter, being less known, may be taken up the first.

Rogers had already published his "Pleasures of Memory." His "Epistle to a Friend" (1798) and "Human Life" (1819) are in the same vein of sentimental didacticism, though there is much kindly experience in the latter poem which makes one see how the author could believe it his best. The aims and models of both poems are indicated in the opening words to the Preface of the earlier one: "Every reader turns with pleasure to those passages of Horace, and Pope and Boileau, which describe how they lived and where they dwelt; and which, being interspersed among their satirical writings, derive a secret and irresistible grace from the contrast, and are admirable examples of what in painting is termed repose." Of the early Pope discipleship and "Pleasures of Hope" of Campbell we have already spoken. He produced nothing worth mentioning in this vein during his London years; but the spirit of it was still in him as shown by the part he played in the Bowles-Pope Controversy. In 1814 he shocked the London audience before which he was lecturing by preferring Pope to Dryden. Around 1810 he impressed Leigh Hunt as a "French Virgil," "a taste over anxious not to commit itself, and refining and diminishing nature as in a drawing-room mirror. This fancy was strengthened in the course of conversation, by his expatiating on the greatness of Racine." Spencer's longest poem, "The Year of Sorrow," is in Dryden's manner; in it he says to the "Daughters of Genius":

Yours be the task. . . .  
 The rights of antique beauty to proclaim,  
 The Gothic fiend from all her realms to chase,  
 And throne the Grecian goddess in her place.



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The bulk of his meager output is society verse, mildly reminiscent of Prior.

Tom Moore wrote many hundred lines in the pure Pope tradition, much of it inspired by his unfortunate trip to America, of which the following extract from his poem "To the Honorable W. R. Spencer" may be sufficient for a Yankee audience:

Take Christians, Mohawks, democrats, and all  
From the rude wigwam to the congress hall,  
From man the savage, whether slaved or free,  
To man the civilized, less tame than he,—  
'Tis one dull chaos, one unfertile strife  
Betwixt half polished and half barbarous life;  
Where every ill the ancient world could brew  
Is mixed with every grossness of the new;  
Where all corrupts, though little can entice,  
And naught is known of luxury but its vice.

"Corruption" and "Intolerance," in the same shopworn dress, were published 1808; and briefer feeble echoes of the once great couplet were composed by him even after 1830. As for all his society verse in various flippant metres, "The Two Penny Post-Bag," "The Fudge Family in Paris," etc., it is far enough from the wits of Queen Anne but much nearer to them than to Wordsworth. Hunt in 1818 wrote of Moore as "among the poets who were bred up in the French school."

Henry Luttrell, whose verse, according to Moore, "was, like everything Luttrell ever did, full of polish and point," composed his "Advice to Julia" and "Letter to Julia" in octosyllabic couplets, a joint product of Butler and Prior. He recognizes frankly that his poetry is the child of his London environment.

Here frown, 'tis true, no hills gigantic,  
Of towering height and shapes romantic.

The Lake does not

reflect the form  
Of some rude castle, seat sublime  
Of war, and violence, and crime. . . .

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In short, Hyde-Park is not the Highlands.  
But, though ungraced with one of these,  
Still we have lawns, and paths, and trees.  
Why should our landscape blush for shame?  
'Tis fresh and gay, if flat and tame.  
None view it awe-struck or surprised;  
But still, 'tis smart and civilized.

All of which is no bad description of Luttrell's gracefully mediocre verse. His Julia is a modern Belinda, his mood that of "The Rape of the Lock"; and if he wrote like the Augustans, it was because he lived and talked like them. Milman, after breakfasting at Rogers's in 1834, spoke of "Luttrell's finely pointed sentences."

Of Byron's poems in which he saw fit to

venture o'er

The path which Pope and Gifford trod before,

"The Age of Bronze" was written after he left England, and the others between 1808 and 1812. "The Waltz" was the only one published in England during the four years of Byron's London popularity, though a pirated edition of "The Curse of Minerva" came out in Philadelphia in 1815. Aside from "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" none of them had genuine merit; but that Byron should have composed over three thousand lines of satire in the neo-classic couplet is a striking index of his literary faith. On his return from the Mediterranean he was eager to print his "Hints from Horace" instead of "Childe Harold," such was his confidence in the magic of the old-time metre. In "English Bards" the dried-up mummy of the Queen Anne tradition became for an hour alive, took on a real likeness to the great though narrow genius that it so often had travestied.

Oh pen perverted! paper misapplied!  
Had Cottle still adorned the counter's side,  
Bent o'er the desk, or, born to useful toils,  
Been taught to make the paper which he soils,  
Ploughed, delved, or plied the oar with lusty limb,  
He had not sung of Wales, nor I of him.

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Even Byron's two wildly romantic tales, "Lara" and "The Corsair," are metrically modeled on Crabbe, and have many separate lines reminiscent of Pope's compression and antithesis:

Consign their souls to man's eternal foe,  
And seal their own to spare some wanton's woe;

or

And they that smote for freedom or for sway,  
Deemed few were slain, while more remained to slay.

The influence of Rogers, both as an acquaintance and as a popular poet, must have helped considerably this neo-classic tendency. Byron greatly overrated him. Moore believed him something of an *arbiter elegantiarum* and wrote: "Rogers' criticisms have twice upset all I have done." Another man whose influence must not be forgotten was Gifford, after 1809 the editor of *The Quarterly Review*. He could hardly be called a member of the social group now under consideration, but he was often in contact with them and commanded their respect as a critic. He was a militant neo-classicist, more confirmed than Rogers, who after all, like Pope himself, was rather catholic in taste and upheld the couplet simply because it was peculiarly adapted to his own moods and natural gifts. Byron when in Europe had Gifford choose between different readings in his MSS. or make other changes, and tells us: "I always regarded him as my literary father, and myself as his prodigal son."

Even among the London society poets, however, these Queen Anne imitations were a very insignificant part of the poetry written. Yet before we turn to the rest we must remember that most of this also is far from great. Whether Wordsworth was right for all time or not, he was right for his own age and Byron was wrong as to the poetical influences of country and town. Luttrell and Spencer were very minor figures. Moore, Campbell, and Rogers were all hailed in their own day as poets of the first rank, for, being more closely in contact with the public than Wordsworth and Blake, they knew better what it wanted; but now the glory of all three is departed. More than that, some of the best work of Campbell had been written before his London life, "The Pleasures of Hope" in Scotland, the



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noble "Mariners of England" in Germany. What endures best of Moore's work is neither his *vers de société* nor his popular Oriental romances, but the part which owed least to his London environment and most to his Celtic heritage, "The Irish Melodies." Even the poetry produced by Byron during this period becomes on analysis woefully unsatisfactory. Because he was both a great and a popular writer the world has believed that his greatness and his popularity went hand in hand, a belief that hardly squares with the facts. Before 1816 he was an astoundingly popular second-rate poet. After 1816 he was a great world genius with dwindling applause. It is an impressive fact that this gifted Englishman wrote almost none of his best poetry on British soil. "There's not a joy the world can give," the "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte," and the best of the "Hebrew Melodies" are practically all that our age much cares for, save two or three lyrics written after the rupture with his wife and on the very eve of his departure. All of "Childe Harold," "Don Juan," "Beppo," "The Vision of Judgment," "The Dream," "The Epistle to Augusta," "Darkness," all the dramas, both good and bad, "The Prisoner of Chillon," "Mazeppa," were composed on the continent. Of the extracts from Byron in Ward's "English Poets," only about one-seventh were written before the scandal of 1816.

There is another fact closely related to this general mediocrity. Wordsworth's return to nature, Scott's return to feudalism, grew out of emotions that had been deeply felt from boyhood. Hogg, despite all his faults, wrote of stories that he had lived with as a child. About the "romantic" elements in the work of the London society poets there is frequently a made-to-order atmosphere. We feel too often that they wrote with their ears open for the applause or hisses of the audience. We detect the rouge on their odalisques and the false beards on their druids. Spencer in 1796 translated Bürger's "Lenore," it being the fashion that year to translate that poem. By 1802 German melodrama was unpopular, so he wrote his "Urania" ridiculing it. Rogers's "Columbus" pictures the great discoverer sailing over mystic seas aided by angels and opposed by demons, the whole forming a monstrous compound of "The Ancient Mariner" and "The Rape of the Lock." There are admirable pas-

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sages in Campbell's "Gertrude of Wyoming," and in the Oriental romances of Byron and Moore; but who can feel that as wholes they ring true? In these works the authors became romantic poets, not because nature made them so, but because the popular demand made them so.

Such efforts were not wholly in vain, however; and in the Scotch poems of Campbell and the Irish poems of Moore there is often a nobler note. In Moore both the Pope imitations and the sham Orientalism of "Lalla Rookh" and "The Loves of the Angels" were half-hearted responses to currents of taste among his associates. "Tell Kate she must leave her Boileau to me in her will," he wrote to his mother in 1812; but though his head was neo-classic, his heart was Irish. The Celtic strain in him may be adulterated and artificialized; but there is enough of the genuine mood to make parts of the "Irish Melodies" great poetry. How could we expect compelling sincerity in narrative verse or satire from the man who wrote: "Music,—the only art for which, in my own opinion, I was born with a real natural love; my poetry, such as it is, having sprung out of my deep feeling for music." In "The Irish Melodies" there are many notes, one of the best of them that of romantic medievalism. Almost in the year when he printed the satirical couplets of "Intolerance" he was singing of Brian the Brave, killed at Clontarf in the eleventh century, and of the lady who walked unscathed through his kingdom, though

Rich and rare were the gems she wore.

In Ossianic dirge he tells us,

No more to chiefs and ladies bright  
The harp of Tara swells.

On Lough Neagh's bank as the fisherman strays,  
When the clear cold eve's declining,  
He sees the round towers of other days  
In the wave beneath him shining.

We have the song of Fionnuala, the daughter of Lir, who "was, by some supernatural power, transformed into a swan, and condemned

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to wander, for many hundred years, over certain lakes and rivers in Ireland, till the coming of Christianity"; the song of the ancient O'Ruark; and medieval legends of St. Senanus and St. Kevin. O'Donohue's mistress waits to see her unearthly chieftain ride his white horse out of the blue depths of the Killarney lakes, and the young poet by the coast of Arranmore to see "Hy Brysail or the Enchanted Island, the Paradise of the Pagan Irish." Then there are patriotic poems of modern times, such as that on Emmet:

Oh! breathe not his name, let it sleep in the shade,  
Where cold and unhonored his relics are laid;

earnest love songs, such as

Go where glory waits thee,  
But while fame elates thee,  
Oh! still remember me;

and lyrics in more playful vein, such as "The time I've lost in wooing." It may be that when we compare all this with Burns we feel the effect of Moore's "boudoir education"; it may be that his Irish patriotism loved the sound of the harp better than that of the bullet; but the great musician is heard in his lyrics even if the great man is not, and the witchery of song is there.

Campbell, unlike Moore, was genuine in both his neo-classicism and his ultra-romanticism. For the student of literary currents he presents a marked dualism in taste and creative work; and the roots of this dualism can be traced in his early life. As in the case of his great fellow Scotchman, many influences of ancestry and tradition inclined him toward the medieval-romantic. He was lineally descended from the first Norman lord of Lochawe. His mother was intimately acquainted with the traditional songs of the Highlands, especially Argyllshire. Beattie tells us that "the ballad poetry of Scotland was familiar to his ear, long before he could comprehend its meaning." In youth he was an admirer of "Ossian," and wrote an Ossianic poem, "Morven and Fillan." At the age of seventeen he spent some time among the romantic Hebrides, and before going there was, according to Beattie, "already familiar with their feudal



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history and poetic legends." Here Campbell wrote: "The Point of Callioch commands a magnificent prospect of thirteen Hebrid-islands, among which are Staffa and Icolmkill, which I visited with enthusiasm." Yet there were distinct counteracting influences. Of his father, whom he resembled, the son wrote:

His soul's proud instinct sought not to enjoy  
Romantic fictions, like a minstrel boy.

The first poets with whom young Campbell became familiar in English were Pope, Gray, and Goldsmith, whose influence can be clearly traced in his own work. At the university he was "the Pope of Glasgow," and Horace was his favorite lyricist. The two streams mingle in some of his early poetry, where the most romantic nature worship is voiced in the time-worn couplet. At Mull in 1795, with his eye on the object, he described

The dark blue rocks, in barren grandeur piled;  
The cuckoo, sighing to the pensive wild.

At the age of twenty he wrote:

I loved to trace the wave-worn shore, and view  
Romantic Nature in her wildest hue.  
There, as I linger'd on the vaulted steep,  
Iona's towers toll'd mournful o'er the deep;  
Till all my bosom owned a sacred mood,  
And blessed the wild delight of solitude.

In the very year which produced the half neo-classic "Pleasures of Hope" he planned a medieval poem on William Tell, which was never published. Three years before "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" was printed, he felt the medieval thrill of Melrose Abbey. Is it any wonder that the fellow countryman of Scott and the London associate of Rogers should be at once the leading defender of Pope in 1819 and the poet of "Invincible romantic Scotia's shore"?

The highly romantic nature and perhaps also the poetic merit of Campbell's medieval poems have been too little noticed. "O'Connor's Child" and "Reullura" introduce the ancient Innisfail and "the dark-attired Culdee" of our recent Celtic revival. The wizard

who warns Lochiel is of the same type as Brian in "The Lady of the Lake." "Glenara" deals with the same story as Joanna Baillie's "Family Legend"; "Earl March looked on his dying child" with the same tradition as Scott's "Maid of Neidpath"; "The Brave Roland" with that of Schiller's "Knight of Toggenburg." The German medieval strain occurs also in "The Ritter Ban."

Luttrell produced nothing of merit in any romantic vein; Spencer only two short poems, his version of "Lenore" and his pathetic medieval ballad of "Beth-Gelert." Rogers's "Jacqueline," written in Scott's metre and located in the France of Louis *Le Grand*, is as near to the medieval-romantic as Rogers ever came successfully, but not very near. Like much of that author's work it has a considerable degree of negative charm.

True lovers of Byron will prefer to think of him as the great lonely misanthrope of later years; the student of public psychology is attracted to his early career as that of a popular phenomenon in literary history. From 1812 to at least 1818 Scott was dethroned; and the supremacy of Byron not only in number of readers but also in critical applause was unquestioned. Immediately upon publication ten thousand copies of "The Corsair" were sold, almost as many as were marketed of Scott's "Lord of the Isles" in a decade and a half, more than would be sold in a century of a separately printed "Excursion." Yet these three poems encountered the same public, "The Excursion" appearing in the same year as "The Corsair," and "The Lord of the Isles" a few months later.

As compared with his predecessor on the popular throne, Byron showed both likenesses and differences. Like Scott he was virile and vigorous, yet with an occasional sauce of sentimentality; like Scott he brought in a wealth of picturesque new details without making too exacting demands on his reader's power to think; the narratives of both, though not always well constructed, moved with rapidity and spirit. In some or all of these respects both differed markedly from the great unpopular poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley. Byron's was the reign of Orientalism, Scott's that of medievalism; but both types appealed to the same traits in the general reader, the love of novelty, adventure, and local color.

Byron himself felt this. "I shall never forget," he wrote, "the singular scene on entering Tepaleen [in Albania] at five in the afternoon, as the sun was going down. It brought to my mind (with some change of *dress*, however) Scott's description of Branksome Castle in his 'Lay,' and the feudal system." In 1813 he wrote to Moore, in words that may have helped to produce "Lalla Rookh": "Stick to the East;—the oracle, Stael, told me it was the only poetical policy. The North, South, and West have all been exhausted; but from the East we have nothing but Southey's unsaleables." Scott no doubt wrote from longer and deeper experience in describing the wars of his own countrymen and ancestors; yet he also in the Waverley novels turned to other countries and even to the East when he felt that his public was growing tired of Scotland. In all these respects "The Bride of Abydos" and "The Corsair" were the logical successors of "Marmion."

—The fundamental difference was that the poetry of Scott was wholesome and colored by reason, that of Byron morbid and colored by passion. Carlyle divided all romantic writing into Goetzism and Wertherism, the literature of medieval adventure and the literature of melancholy subjectivity. As Scott's popular reign had been that of Goetzism, so Byron's was that of Wertherism. It is easy to see how this should have a wide appeal. In Germany "The Sorrows of Werther" had chimed in so well with the mood of the rising generation that melancholy and suicide became favorite recreations of young gentlemen. Everybody read it. When Richter wishes to emphasize Fraulein Thienette's utter ignorance of books, he tells us that "in literature she does not even know Werther." That was equivalent to a dozen exclamation points. Byron's heroes do not commit suicide, that final step being more in harmony with German thoroughness than with Anglo-Saxon practicality; but they have the same "pale cast of thought" and unhappy love affairs. The Giaour, like Werther, has his life blasted by his hopeless affection for another man's wife; Selim by his hopeless attachment to another man's *fiancée*; and Conrad (who is probably the same as Lara) having lost his own love by tuberculosis, devotes the rest of his life to melancholy and adultery. It seems hardly fair to give such a



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summary of poems which contain many admirable passages; but, though the flowers of poetry are there, they are certainly twined on a very rotten trellis. What is bad, however, probably helped the sale as much as what is good. Byron was the first great narrative poet in a century to make sex passion a leading motif; with the exception of Burns and Moore, almost the only great poet during that time to handle it in any form more vivid than stereotyped verses of compliment. The love affairs of Scott's poems are obviously dragged in with great reluctance and almost painfully calm and respectable. For us, who have grown sated even with Swinburne's "Laus Veneris" and the revived Elizabethan dramatists, it is hard to realize how much novelty this element had in "The Giaour" and its fellows.

The cold in clime are cold in blood,  
Their love can scarce deserve the name;  
But mine was like a lava flood  
That boils in Ætna's breast of flame. . . .  
I knew but to obtain or die.  
I die—but first I have possess'd,  
And come what may, I *have been* blest.

We suspect that Byron had a larger percentage of women among his readers than Scott.

There is, however, another element in these early poems which appears to have made an equally far-reaching and much nobler appeal. We meet it continually in the first two cantos of "Childe Harold" and fitfully in the "Oriental Tales." It is a feeling for the romance of geography and history, a realization that earth is wide and old, crowded with wonders, opportunities, and memories. All this had been kindled into genuine fire by the poet's travels, and weakened but not destroyed by his subsequent life in London.

Oh! yet—for there my steps have been:  
These feet have press'd the sacred shore,

he cries of the Troad in one of the few good passages in "Abydos." The death agony of the Giaour smacks of melodrama, but not the death agony of Greece at the beginning of the same poem. Would

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not any of us give all the fighting and love-making in "The Corsair" for the noble lines that open the third canto, when

On old Aegina's rock and Idra's isle  
The god of gladness sheds his parting smile;  
O'er his own regions lingering, loves to shine,  
Though there his altars are no more divine?

Modern realists feel no interest whatever in that English Werther known as "Childe Harold," but a great deal in the battlefields and bullfights of Spain by which he leads us. Still more on Hellenic soil he makes us realize that

Where'er we tread 'tis haunted, holy ground.

Madame Girardin, after reading the Spanish travels of Gautier asked him, "But Théo, are there no Spaniards in Spain?" One could wish that there had been no Turks in Byron's Turkey and no Greeks for him in Greece, so far is his poetry of description and association above the crude melodrama of his early heroes and heroines. The books of travel that were poured out during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were legion in number. The English people, shut in with their own thoughts so long through the eighteenth century, veritably hungered and thirsted after the new and remote; and that spirit not only helped to make "Childe Harold" but also helped to make its audience after it was printed.

When the popular dictatorship passed from "Rokeby" to "Childe Harold" it was not wholly a transfer of power from the Scotch to the southern spirit. Byron's father was English, but his mother a Highlander; and his early boyhood had been passed at Aberdeen between the mountains and the sea. His romantic narratives have often the lowland love of dare-devil adventure so common in Hogg, Leyden, and Scott, so rare in Keats, Coleridge, and Shelley. A touch of Celtic Highland blood, the blood of "Ossian," may have encouraged the Wertherism in him. He declares in "Don Juan":

I am half a Scot by birth, and bred  
A whole one, and my heart flies to my head,—

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As "Auld Lang Syne" brings Scotland, one and all,  
Scotch plaids, Scotch snoods, the blue hills, and  
clear streams,  
The Dee, the Don, Balgounie's brig's *black wall*,  
All my boy feelings, all my gentler dreams. . . .

I "*scotch'd* not kill'd" the Scotchman in my blood,  
And love the land of "mountain and of flood."

After the departure of Byron in 1816 our interest in the London society poets begins to wane. Moore's "Lalla Rookh" was already in the works, and came out the next year. Henceforward this little fellowship of writers produced nothing which even in the judgment of its own age was supremely good. Moore turned out clever society verse, and his flabby "Loves of the Angels," which sold on the strength of his former reputation; Rogers his "Italy," which, though not bad poetry, sold on the strength of its magnificent bindings rather than its merits. In "Lalla Rookh" the Orientalism of Byron continued its popular reign. Though the poem has more good passages than our own age seems willing to admit, unquestionably much of its rich carving is only stucco. Nevertheless, such as it was, seven editions of it were called for within a year, and Longman over twenty years later thought it "the cream of the copyrights." Among other languages it was very soon translated into Persian; and a German version was made by the romantic novelist Fouqué, the author of "Undine." The Prince Royal of Prussia wrote that he always slept with a copy of it under his pillow. Meanwhile Keats and Shelley were beginning to publish, to the detriment of both pocketbook and mental tranquillity.

We cannot pass over the latter years of this group without a word concerning their connection with the American author Washington Irving. He came to England in 1815, and from then until 1818 lived mainly at Liverpool, after that either in London or on the continent at places frequented by English writers. Soon after landing he formed a cordial friendship with Campbell, whose brother had been his friend in America. In 1820 he met Moore in France. Before long the two authors were on such an affectionate



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footing that Irving wrote: "Scarce a day passes without our seeing each other"; and some months later Moore introduced him to the Hollands, with whom thereafter he frequently dined. In 1822 at Lady Spencer's he first met Rogers, and often afterward breakfasted with him. He knew W. R. Spencer and apparently Luttrell, who was reported to him as "warm in your praises." With the exception of Scott, all English authors who were intimate friends of his belonged to the London society poets. In this fact there is nothing remarkable. They were the only poets who combined geographical propinquity to Irving with an unquestioned reputation. It is worth noting, however, that that same dualism of style which characterizes the poetry of these writers is found in Irving's prose of this period, for as they imitated Pope, so he imitated Addison; and as they alternated or mixed the early eighteenth-century manner with the supernatural and romantic, so did he. There would seem to have been a natural affinity of tastes, which aided in drawing them together.

The London society poets were all exceedingly popular, with the exception of Scott and Crabbe the only consistently popular poets of the romantic generation. That feeling of sympathy with the public trend of thought, which conduces so much to popularity—a feeling so glaringly absent in Wordsworth and Blake—may have aided in drawing them to the metropolis. They lived in an age very different from that of Pope; in many ways they wrote very differently; yet more than we have realized, the wits of Queen Anne were akin to those later wits of Holland House and of Rogers' breakfast table.

PART II

ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM THE DOWNFALL OF  
NAPOLEON TO THE RISE OF TENNYSON  
(1816-1830)





## CHAPTER VII

### *The Scotch Era of Prose, 1814-1830*

FROM 1795 to 1814 Caledonian literature had been almost wholly poetry, even the erudition of Leyden and Scott venting itself in the editing and annotation of verse, rather than in separate treatises. Any leanings toward prose on the part of authors north of the Tweed were promptly discouraged by publishers, who evidently knew their public. Scott in 1810 was frightened by Ballantyne into abandoning his unfinished fragment of "Waverley"; Galt's "Annals of the Parish" was rejected by Constable with the remark that "Scottish novels would not do"; and Susan Ferrier's "Marriage," planned in 1810, was not published until eight years later.

After 1814 the significant achievements of both major and minor northern writers were in prose. Such poems as did appear, with the exception of Lockhart's renderings from the Spanish, were weak, belated survivals of tendencies already moribund. Scott's "Harold the Dauntless," in which the sun of "Marmion" went down forever, had been mainly composed long before publication; Hogg's interminable "Queen Hynde" should not have been composed at all. "Waverley," "Marriage," and "The Annals of the Parish" were drawn from the dusty slumber of years and found an eager public loudly calling for successors.

One chief cause for this revival of prose was obviously the triumph of the Waverley novels, which led the way and made every publisher hope to find a new Scott among his young prose contributors. Another reason was that the Scotch vein of modern poetry—so much more narrow, so much less varied and Protean than the English—was worn out; and the northern writers must now utter prose or nothing. The influence of Wordsworth and Coleridge, which was leavening so much poetry south of the Tweed, counted for nothing

beyond that river. Even the praise of John Wilson could not make his countrymen respond. In 1818, according to *Blackwood's*, the poems of Wordsworth, though highly regarded by the English, were known to the Scotch only through extracts and reviews; and as for the verses of Coleridge, "the reading public of Scotland are in general ignorant that any such poems exist." Also the whole British public after 1818 began to be sated with their long banquet of poetry; and the departure from verse, though much more marked in Edinburgh than in London, was symptomatic of growing tendencies in both countries.

The Scotch flood of prose divides into three closely related currents: that of the Waverley novels; that of *Blackwood's Magazine*; and that of the minor novelists. The writers involved were generally in personal contact with each other; common elements as well as divergencies can be found in their writings; and they may be considered as forming together a fairly distinct literary eddy.

Scott led the way with his novels; and unquestionably much of the work produced by minors around him was the backwash from that great main flood. The swarming crowd of his imitators had temporarily frightened him away from remote ages without destroying in him that love for an antique atmosphere which was part of his being. So from 1814 to 1819 come novels which are located in comparatively modern times, but over which the spirit of a remote past hangs often like a transforming haze. It was precisely this quality which James Ballantyne criticised in "Waverley": "Considering that 'sixty years since' only leads us back to the year 1750, a period when our fathers were alive and merry, it seems to me that the air of antiquity diffused over the character is rather too great to harmonize with the time." But the "air of antiquity" was precisely what Scott did not desire to give up; in the year when "Waverley" was printed he published his "Essay on Chivalry." The same spell from antiquity—or from Ann Radcliffe—hangs over the eighteenth-century events of "Guy Mannering."

The roar of the ocean was now near and full, and the moon, which began to make her appearance, gleamed on a turreted and apparently a

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ruined mansion of considerable extent. Mannering fixed his eyes upon it with a disconsolate sensation.

"Why, my little fellow," he said, "this is a ruin, not a house."

"Ah, but the lairds lived there langsyne; that's Elangowan Auld Place. There's a hantle bogles about it; but ye needna be feared, I never saw ony mysell, and we're just at the door o' the New Place."

This atmosphere appears often in even the most realistic of Scott's early novels. "The Antiquary" is "near the end of the eighteenth century," "The Black Dwarf" at the beginning of it, "Old Mortality" at the close of the seventeenth. "Rob Roy," like "The Black Dwarf," is "early in the eighteenth century." "The Heart of Midlothian" begins with the Porteus riot of 1737. The unfortunate original for the bride of Lammermoor died in 1669; the events of "A Legend of Montrose" occurred about twenty years farther back. No one of these early novels antedated the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642. Yet in every one, either intermittently or consistently, occurs the glamour of antiquarian romance or Gothic mystery and decay. Men dig for treasure in moonlit ruins, and find it at last under a tomb of the twelfth century. The Black Dwarf moves in the shadowy background of his story as mysteriously as Schedoni in Mrs. Radcliffe's "Italian." It is not for nothing that the forty-second chapter of "Old Mortality" is prefaced by a quotation from Spenser. Something of his medieval atmosphere, of terrors more than human, hangs around the outlawed Burley, haunted by his guilty conscience in his lonely cavern, where "His figure, dimly ruddied by the light of the red charcoal, seemed that of a fiend in the lurid atmosphere of Pandemonium." Feudalism, adventure, and the misty mountains that had nursed the Ossianic poems of Macpherson, play their part in "Rob Roy," and "A Legend of Montrose." Jeanie Deans is the captive of robbers, and a whiff from the dungeons of Ann Radcliffe breathes often from the lips of the demented Madge Wildfire: "I may weel say that I am come out of the City of Destruction, for my mother is Mrs. Bat's-eyes, that dwells at Deadman's Corner." Wolf's Crag in "The Bride of Lammermoor" is like a medieval ruin on the Rhine, and the dying image of feudalism seems personified in the last lord of "the Ravenswood



family, whose ancient grandeur and portentous authority, credulity had graced with so many superstitious attributes."

The spread and degradation of medievalism not only led Scott to disguise, and in part suppress, his own enthusiasm for it during the half decade discussed; but it also made him mine extensively for three or four years another vein—equally Scotch, equally national, worked before by Allan Ramsay and Burns and many a minor north of the Tweed—the vein of broad humorous or trenchant realism. Lockhart justly pointed out that "The Antiquary" is "in all its humbler and softer scenes, the transcript of actual Scottish life, as observed by the man himself." So is the touching story of Jeanie Deans founded on fact. After 1818, however, this element, though fitfully revived, becomes much more rare. With the publication of Susan Ferrier's "Marriage" in that year began an inundation of minor Scotch novels, mainly harshly or humorously realistic, which probably made Scott feel crowded by his imitators out of the field of realism as he had previously been crowded by them out of the field of martial antiquity. Like many another popular author, he made his life a series of doublings and twists to avoid the pursuing hounds that his own popularity had summoned.

Hence in 1819, in "Ivanhoe," he swung back to the Middle Ages of his early love, but to a past that was foreign instead of Scotch. "Am glad you find anything to entertain you in 'Ivanhoe,' " wrote the author to Lady Louisa Stuart. "Novelty is what this giddy-paced time demands imperiously, and I certainly studied as much as I could to get out of the old beaten track, leaving those who like to keep the road, which I have rutted pretty well." Scott returned to modern life temporarily in "St. Ronan's Well" and to a not very remote epoch in two or three other cases; but the dominant note through the Waverley novels from now on was that of antiquity, no longer the past of a single country but the past of Europe. "The Abbot" is in Scotland, "The Betrothed" on the edge of Wales, "Ivanhoe" in England, "Quentin Durward" in France; "Anne of Geierstein" leads into Switzerland, "Count Robert" to Byzantium, and "The Talisman" to Palestine. Eyes flash fire through visored

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helmets; fair ladies lean from Gothic balconies to fasten letters on their lovers' lances; young maidens wander disguised as pilgrims; and the Norman spear encounters the Welsh club under the battlements of a border castle. This continual handling of periods remote and vaguely known could not help but have a devitalizing effect on the author's work. Antaeus was deliberately putting himself on stilts. Most of the later novels, "The Betrothed," "Anne of Geierstein," "Count Robert of Paris," and "Castle Dangerous," show the lack of bracing contact with mother earth, and are full of conventionalized pseudo-romance, dangerously akin, at its worst, to that of Letitia Landon. "The Talisman," the last true masterpiece, was written immediately following the death of Byron; after that for both Scott and Great Britain the twilight of pseudo-romanticism gathered fast.

Considered as permanent literature, the Waverley novels easily overshadow all other Scottish prose of their time. In many ways also they were independent of that prose; where suggestions are borrowed the minor is almost always the borrower. Yet great and small writer alike grew out of a common environment. Even to-day, says Mrs. Oliphant, "Edinburgh preserves a very distinct stamp of her own; but in those days she was as individual and distinct as Paris or Vienna." It was one of Lockhart's amusements to "bring these Southerners into close communication with a set of your Northern lights . . . make them discuss the differences between England and Scotland in various points of manners, feelings, education, etc." Constable, the publisher of Scott, had given northern literature a marked impetus by his financial encouragement. "Ten, even twenty guineas a sheet for a review," says Lord Cockburn, "£2000 or £3000 for a single poem, and £1000 for two philosophical dissertations, drew authors out of their dens, and made Edinburgh a literary mart famous with strangers, and the pride of its own citizens."

It was in an atmosphere like this that *Blackwood's Magazine* had birth in 1817. Though it later took on a cosmopolitan character, it was originally Scotch in parentage and temper. It and *The Edinburgh Review*, says Mrs. Oliphant, "were both Berserkers, wild



riders of the North, incautious, daring, irresponsible," as contrasted with the harsh but eminently respectable *Quarterly* at London. Like a genuine moss-trooper *Blackwood's* pricked hard and fast at all its literary enemies, and in dealing with those whom it liked was as reluctant to spoil good sport as Sir Lucius O'Trigger. "Though averse to being cut up myself, I like to abuse my friends," wrote Wilson in a typical mood. Even Scott was once attacked, apparently in a spirit of sheer bravado, by those who must have been his admirers. Maginn wrote to Blackwood in the same militant temper, "In London you are blamed for attacking obscure Londoners, most particularly Hazlitt. He is really too insignificant an animal."

Yet this side of *Maga*, so obvious, so often dwelt on, is not the only important one. She meant to be, and in many ways she was, not the enemy but the friend of authors. With the exception of *The London Magazine*, no other periodical contained a greater wealth of literary matter. Its reviews, though at times monumental misjudgments, are on the whole less unrighteous than one might think. We hear much about its venomous attacks on Keats, who did not deserve them, and on Leigh Hunt and Cornelius Webb—who did. Why do we not hear as often of *Blackwood's* as the first influential champion for Wordsworth, as often of "the long and triumphant battle which *Maga* has fought in defence of that gentleman's character and genius"? If it maligned Shelley after he had become associated with the "Cockneys," it was the one great magazine which before that had amply recognized his powers. If it dealt roughly with Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria," it had generous reviews for him later. It spoke with justice and discernment of Milman and Procter, of Crabbe, and of Byron's "Don Juan." All this is different enough from the well-bred indifference of Murray, who wrote to the editors: "You have unfortunately too much of the Lake School, for which no interest is felt here."

Besides reviews and political articles, *Blackwood's* published a number of poems and novels of some merit, as well as papers on the literature of Italy, Germany, and Scandinavia. Its two chief monuments, however, are the "Tales from Blackwood" and the "Noctes Ambrosianae." Most of the "Tales" appeared in two annual waves,



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the first in 1821, the second in 1829, with a few scattering between. Without being great, they are ingenious and readable, and a useful index as to popular taste. Gothic mystery and terror brood over nearly all. Some are tales of the sea. The Flying Dutchman sends his last message home. A tragedy of jealousy and murder takes place on a floating beacon. A disabled ship hangs for hours at anchor over transparent water in which dozens of her dead, who have just had sea burial, can be clearly seen. "A large block happened to fall overboard, and the agitation which it occasioned in the sea produced an apparent augmentation of their number, and a horrible distortion of their limbs and countenances." A negro pirate captain is a noble villain, a link between Byron's Conrad and Hugo's Bug-Jargal. "An Adventure in the Northwest Territory" invades the "forest primeval" of Chateaubriand. There are two stories which may have furnished suggestion to the gloomy ingenuity of Poe, one in which a man is imprisoned under a gigantic swinging bell, another in which a victim is crushed by a gradually contracting dungeon. The Italian current is represented by "Di Vasari" and "Colonna the Painter." In the former the lover of another man's wife is imprisoned and left to die in her chamber, as in Balzac's "Grande Bretèche," only by the wife's act instead of the husband's. The latter is a story of love, revenge, and art enthusiasm deciphered from a worm-eaten manuscript of the Radcliffe type. The *doppelgängerei* of the German *Romantiker* is imported in other stories, in one of which two students at Göttingen exchange bodies, with the result that the hero barely escapes being buried alive, and identities become as confused as in Hoffmann's "Devil's Elixir" or Gautier's "Avatar." "The Headsman" uses the old superstition that an executioner's axe clicks when its destined victim goes by, a belief which plays an important part in "Fair Annerl," the masterpiece of the German Romanticist Brentano. In some ways these "Tales" are distinctly Scotch, in others they represent the converging of various international currents.

From 1825 on John Wilson enriched the pages of *Maga* with his "Noctes." They have all the vitality which is life, and all the formlessness which is not art. One must wander in them as he would in a meadow, browsing where he feels inclined. In these *symposia*

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Christopher North (Wilson himself), the Ettrick Shepherd, and other characters real or imaginary, wake at random, as the whim leads them, the strings of humor or pathos, poetry or abuse. "The South Briton," says Professor Elton, "until he has read a few of the 'Noctes Ambrosianae,' has no notion of what old Scottish convivial eloquence can be, when in full spate." Wilson's half-extemporaneous dialogues recall the words of his fellow countryman Stevenson: "Natural talk, like ploughing, should turn up a large surface of life, rather than dig mines into geological strata. Masses of experience, anecdote, incident, cross-lights, quotation, historical instances, the whole flotsam and jetsam of two minds forced in and in upon the matter in hand from every point of the compass, and from every degree of mental elevation and abasement—these are the material with which talk is fortified."

Socially, the *Blackwood's* group was the heart of the prose eddy in Scotland. They were connected on one side with the renowned Sir Walter, on the other with the minor novelists, nearly all of whom were among their contributors. The original leaders were William Blackwood himself, James Hogg, Lockhart, and John Wilson (the friend of Wordsworth), who had now been driven by financial reverses to Edinburgh and industry. William Blackwood's friendly attitude toward the author of "Waverley" was not always reciprocated by the great novelist; but Hogg and Wilson were the friends of Scott, and his faithful retainer Laidlaw was an occasional contributor, as was his grateful though wayward *protégé* R. P. Gillies. The chief bond, however, between Scott and *Blackwood's* was in the person of Lockhart, who met the arch romancer one year after the founding of the magazine, and became his son-in-law in 1820.

It is a vivid picture of group activity that Mrs. Oliphant gives in describing the editorial headquarters of *Maga*: "One can imagine the bustle and the commotion in the rooms in Princes Street, the endless consultations, the wild suggestions: Lockhart, pensive and serious, almost melancholy, in the fiery fever of satire and ridicule that possessed him, launching his javelin with a certain pleasure in the mischief as well as the most perfect self-abandonment to the impulse of the moment; Wilson, with Homeric roars of laughter,



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and a recklessness still less under control, not caring whom he attacked nor with what bitterness, apparently unconscious of the sting till it was inflicted, when he collapsed into ineffectual penitence; Hogg bustling in, all flushed and heated with a new idea, in which the rustic daffing of the countryside gave a rougher force to the keen shafts of the gentlemen. That it must be a strong number, something to startle the world, a sort of fiery meteor to blaze across the Edinburgh sky and call every man's attention, was the first necessity."

In 1821 William Maginn, an Irishman who had already sent some contributions from Cork, came to Edinburgh and joined the band. "Bright broken Maginn!" His wit and thirst were great, his wisdom and will power small; and if he added to the brilliancy of *Blackwood's* he hardly reflected dignity upon it. Thackeray has given a picture of all that he was and failed to be in the character of Captain Shandon. A few years later a more tragic wreck, De Quincey, became a contributor to *Maga* and wandered to Edinburgh to end his days there, having been first introduced to the magazine by Wilson, his old friend of the Lakes. On many more occasional contributors there is no need of dwelling.

It is not easy to draw a sharp distinction between the literary output of *Blackwood's* and that of the minor novelists. Most of them were contributors to *Maga*, and several novels which were eventually printed separately first appeared in its pages. In general they represent either the Gothic mystery or the broad realism of Scott's early novels, only the two tendencies run oftener in separate currents, not usually alternating, as with Scott, through the same book.

James Hogg, who turned prose writer in his later years, fathered modern stories of ghosts, murder, and robbery, ancient legends of the supernatural, such as "The Heart of Eildon," or historical novels, such as "The Brownie of Bodsbeck: A Tale of the Covenanters," in which he unfortunately competed with "Old Mortality." His "Confessions of a Justified Sinner" is a story of religious frenzy, insanity, and crime, in which the tale of terror is made semi-realistic without losing its nerve-racking thrill. A similar union of



terror and realism, with the latter more emphasized, appears in Lockhart's "History of Matthew Wald," which was published in the same year (1824). Matthew's wife is not a religious maniac, but she is a religious fanatic; Matthew himself goes mad. It is easy to see how Scott pronounced the story "full of power, but disagreeable." Two years earlier John Wilson published his "Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life." Local realism may have been his aim, for he declared the book "intensely Scottish"; but the verdict of posterity will probably agree with that of Mrs. Oliphant that his sketches "represent the romantic sentimentalism of the day rather than Scotland or country life or anything else in earth or heaven."

Three novelists of Scotch blood who contributed to *Blackwood's* but had little personal contact with its ruling spirits were John Galt, D. M. Moir, and C. R. Gleig. Galt lived mainly at London, though on a northern trip in 1823 he made an admirer of Moir, and a literary disciple as well. Moir, the Δ of *Blackwood's*, furnished nearly four hundred contributions to that magazine, and was the friend of John Wilson, but led the life of a busy local physician at Musselburgh and refused every invitation to settle in the Scotch capital. Gleig passed nearly all his life in England and was connected with Maga only at long range.

Galt's "Annals of the Parish" is the work of a prose Crabbe, his "Entail" that of a local and lesser Zola, as is also his "Ayrshire Legatees," which was first published in *Blackwood's* in 1820. Humor, harshness, and unquestionable veracity are in them; and the author, says Professor Cross, "laid bare the heart of Scotland as only Burns had done." Other novels of this vigorous but narrow genius attempt the historical vein of Scott, though with such ill success that they are no longer remembered in connection with the writer's name. Moir's chief work, "The Life of Mansie Wauch, Tailor in Dalkeith," is in a vein similar to that of Galt, whose friendship had inspired it. It appeared first in *Blackwood's* and was reprinted in 1828. Gleig's "Subaltern," published in the magazine in 1826, is fictionized autobiography, describing the adventures of a soldier in the Peninsular War. Another story of military adventure is "The Youth and Manhood of Cyril Thornton," by Captain

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Thomas Hamilton, who lived in Edinburgh, was a contributor to *Blackwood's* and also a friend of Lockhart and Scott. For a time he was practically one of the staff of *Maga*, and we find Lockhart urging Blackwood to "poke up Tom Hamilton."

Not among the writers for *Blackwood's* yet connected with the eddy around it was Susan Ferrier. She was the friend and "sister shadow" of Scott; her nephew married the daughter of John Wilson; she lived in Edinburgh; and William Blackwood acted as publisher for her first two novels. Her three works, "Marriage," "The Inheritance," and "Destiny," are in a vein that Jane Austen might have used if she had been born a Scotchwoman. Languishing English beauties, red-haired girls and grim-faced aunts of Scotland, epicurean, hard-fisted clergymen and arrogant Highland chiefs, are all handled with kindness or with satire, as the case may be.

Scotch poetry, as pointed out earlier, was moribund after 1814, but was not wholly dead. In 1824 Lockhart published his "Ancient Spanish Ballads," several of which had already appeared in *Maga*. The Spanish vein had been mined by Southey and touched on by Frere. In the year of Lockhart's book appeared Sir John Bowring's "Ancient Poetry and Romance of Spain." At about the same time De Quincey wrote as follows in *The London Magazine*: "In 1808-9 you must well remember what a strong impulse the opening of the Peninsular War communicated to our current literature. The presses of London and the provinces teemed with editions of Spanish books, dictionaries, and grammars; and the motions of the British armies were accompanied by a corresponding activity among British compositors. From the just interest which is now renewed in Spanish affairs, I suppose something of the same scene will recur." Lockhart's free but spirited paraphrases came on the crest of the wave, and started a popular current that was many years in subsiding. "Romantic Spain" now competed with "romantic Italy" among the facile and feeble slaves of the pen. Lockhart's collection includes "historical" ballads of King Roderick and the Cid, "romantic" ballads, among them "Count Arnaldos," paraphrased later by Longfellow as "The Secret of the Sea," and "Moorish" ballads,

At the gates of old Granada, when all its bolts are barred.

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There are long rattling metres and vivid flashes of color. "The March of Bernardo del Carpio" has the masculine energy which Mrs. Hemans failed to excite about the same hero:

The peasant hears upon his field the trumpet of the knight,—  
He quits his team for spear and shield and garniture of might;  
The shepherd hears it 'mid the mist,—he flingeth down his crook,  
And rushes from the mountain like a tempest-troubled brook.

It is a curious contrast with all this and a curious comment on popular taste that the great best seller of the late Caledonian muse was Pollok's "Course of Time," an impossible didactic poem in blank verse, tracing the history of man down from Adam to a date not found by the majority of readers. This belated survival of the eighteenth century, which was published by Blackwood in 1827, went through edition after edition, and finally became a prize book for diligent scholars in Sunday or day schools,

That last infirmity of noble rhymes.

Just as the third decade of the century merged into the fourth, two young Scotch poets, Aytoun and Motherwell, began to revive the martial, antique poetry of "The Lay" and "The Queen's Wake"; but they were of a younger generation and belong to a later period. The years that we have been discussing had been the Scotch reign of prose; and the one genuine triumph in verse had been a translation.



## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Eddy Around Leigh Hunt*

LITERARY historians have their usual differences of opinion as to when the "romantic" or early nineteenth-century period of poetry began. 1760, 1798, and 1805 have all been justly pointed out as significant dates. Naturally the changes in one phase of poetry overlapped those in another, each period named seeing something altered, none beholding a complete revolution. As a boundary between the old and new the years 1814-1816 equaled in importance any that preceded. Those three years witnessed the downfall of Napoleon, the opening up of Europe, the focusing of new and powerful forces on the creative imagination of England. Brilliant foreigners came swarming into London; brilliant Englishmen poured in a sudden exodus through the beautiful landscapes and famous art galleries of the continent. Those years divide the early "romantic poets," who were little imitated in the late nineteenth century, from the younger generation, whose trail spreads over almost all English poetry after 1850. The earlier Byron was rejected by the late nineteenth century; Scott, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, even when much admired, were but little imitated; Keats and Shelley were held up as universal models.

The new eddy that began post-Napoleonic verse grew marked about 1815 or 1816, and gradually disintegrated or realigned itself before Leigh Hunt's departure to Italy in 1822. Its archenemy *Blackwood's* dubbed it the "Cockney" school of poetry; Byron, with more justice, called it "the Suburban School." Most of the authors connected with it were suburbanites, with the virtues and faults which their manner of life tended to develop. They were Londoners

either by birth or adoption; they moved in respectable society but not in the inner circle of wealth and rank; they lived much of their time in Hampstead or other outlying regions of the great metropolis. Blood and training had placed to their credit as much nobility of character as to the London society poets, and greater imaginative power; but had prepared a woeful debit account of foibles and idiosyncrasies that laid them open to ridicule or misunderstanding. Most of them were not university men or men of the world; they had traveled little, they had little wealth.

As is often the case, the central figure in this eddy was neither its greatest author nor its most forcible character. Leigh Hunt was not only inferior to Keats and Shelley as a poet; he was also, in spite of his many virtues, a less dignified and commanding figure as a man. He had none of that leonine dignity and military love of system which made Victor Hugo, the son of a French general, marshal his literary camp as his father had a battalion. Yet Hunt possessed two qualities which rendered him for years the center, and to some extent the leader, of a literary movement. One was his marvelously ✓ correct judgment as to the value of contemporary literature. With all his errors of judgment in other fields we must grant him this. No critic from 1750 to 1830 has had fewer of his decisions reversed by posterity. The other and still more important trait was his ✓ magnetic power of drawing literary men around him as friends. Carlyle, who was not given to gushing, declared him "a man who can be other than loved only by those who have not seen him, or seen him from a distance through a false medium." Lamb found him "the most cordial-minded man I ever knew, and matchless as a fireside companion." Cowden Clarke, his lifelong friend, speaks of "that bewitching spell of manner which characterized Leigh Hunt beyond any man I have ever known."

It is not easy to draw the exact limits of the literary vortex that formed around him, for in the complex life of a great city many cross currents tend to mingle streams that in the main run separate. Some were more close to him as friends than as writers; others more close as writers than as men. Most of them at that time were comparatively obscure; and details about their lives are not always

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plentiful. Some formed part of the eddy for many years; others, such as Shelley, for only a short interval. The group unquestionably included the great lyrists Shelley and Keats, and the lesser but genuine poets J. H. Reynolds, Hunt himself, James and Horace Smith, and Charles Wells. Bryan Waller Procter was more loosely connected with it, as was Lamb's friend Charles Lloyd. Cornelius Webb, though a very minor poet, was one of the circle. It embraced also the prose writers, Lamb and Hazlitt, though the latter's unsociability prevented him from belonging lastingly to any group, and he showed enduring affection only for Lamb. Two painters of considerable rank, Haydon and Severn, complete the list of those who did any remarkable creative work. Besides these there were other members of the social group: Charles Cowden Clarke, later on the eminent Shakespeare scholar, the Novellos, a family of half-Italian musicians, the Ollier brothers,—minor poets and publishers for the crowd, as Cottle had been for the Bristol poets,—Charles Armitage Brown, Dilke, and others.

In December, 1812, Leigh Hunt, then twenty-eight years old and editor of *The Examiner*, was condemned to a fine and two years' imprisonment for the unwisely frank utterances of his paper about the Prince Regent. In his double character as editor of a well-known periodical and martyr for liberty, he naturally drew on himself the eyes of many enthusiastic young poets, and thus laid the foundation for several of his friendships. He was released from prison in February, 1815, and by that time was already beginning to gather around him a literary following.

Before his imprisonment he had known Campbell; during his confinement Byron and Moore had visited their fellow apostle of freedom and treated him with great kindness and cordiality; but none of these men became in any sense his poetical disciples or mingled with the little *coterie* of which he soon became the center. Both in verse and society they knelt to other gods. Keats and several of the lesser poets, who became Hunt's daily companions, they neither met nor wished to meet.

Of the literary eddy to be, Hunt's first recruits were Haydon, Hazlitt, and Lamb. Haydon, later a historical painter of considerable



merit but then a poor, struggling young artist, knew Hunt by 1809, and in 1811 "used to sketch and explain what I thought to Leigh Hunt, then in the height of his *Examiner* reputation." Next year when Haydon was overcome by poverty and what he considered injustice, "Leigh Hunt behaved nobly. He offered me always a plate at his table till Solomon was done." Lamb had contributed to Hunt's brief-lived *Reflector* (1810-12); and he and Hazlitt both visited Hunt in prison, Lamb and his sister coming "in all weathers, hail or sunshine, in daylight and in darkness, even in the dreadful frost and snow of the beginning of 1814." Hazlitt and Lamb had been friends for years. Hazlitt was introduced to Haydon in 1812 at the painter Northcote's, and in a few months was having "daily contests" with him. Hunt had met Charles Ollier in 1810 and James and Horace Smith, authors of the famous "Rejected Addresses," even earlier; but relations were apparently not very close until 1816, in which year Haydon first met Horace Smith.

— While Hunt was in prison young Charles Cowden Clarke "was good enough to be his own introducer, paving his way, like a proper visitor of prisons, with baskets of fruit," although, according to Clarke's statement, they had met earlier at a party. It was in his character as liberal editor that Hunt won this new neophyte, for Clarke tells us: "My father had taken in the *Examiner* newspaper from its commencement, he and I week after week revelling in the liberty-loving, liberty-advocating, liberty-eloquent articles of the young editor; and now that I made his personal acquaintance I was indeed a proud and happy fellow." This eager disciple soon after drew in his wake into the Hunt circle John Keats, who had studied with him at his father's school and been his friend for years. Somewhere around the beginning of 1816 Clarke showed some of Keats's poetry to Hunt and Horace Smith, and as a result of their enthusiasm soon after introduced them to the poet himself.

— Before the end of 1816 two other men, Joseph Severn and John Hamilton Reynolds, had become friends of Keats. Severn at this time was a lonely engraver's apprentice and casual student of art. Later he achieved moderate success as a painter; but his chief claim to immortality is his devoted love for the doomed author of "Hype-

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rion," over whose tragic death he watched so unselfishly, "his perfect friend," as Cowden Clarke enthusiastically declared. During visits at Hampstead in or after 1816 Severn met Hunt, Haydon, Reynolds, and Charles Brown, though the latter only of them appears to have become his intimate friend. In 1817, he tells us, Hunt introduced him to Shelley. Reynolds, one year younger than Keats and equally precocious as a poet, but less capable of continuous improvement, was, for a time at least, almost as close to his great contemporary as Severn.

Shelley and Hunt had met before the latter's imprisonment but had seen little of each other. In 1816, however, when the lonely lyrist came back from Switzerland, he settled at Great Marlow, in Buckinghamshire near London, where for nearly two years, until his departure for Italy in the spring of 1818, he was on terms of close intimacy with Hunt and saw a good deal of the latter's literary friends. It was under Hunt's roof that he met with Keats and Cowden Clarke; and through him his devoted friend Peacock was temporarily drawn by attraction into the outer edge of the enthusiastic circle.

Before 1817 Keats at least was acquainted with Charles Wells, from whom he received some roses and to whom in acknowledgment he wrote a sonnet. In 1818 Lloyd settled in London and as a friend of Lamb came slightly, but only slightly, in touch with Lamb's companions. A more important addition was Bryan Waller Procter, better known in that day by his *nom de plume* of "Barry Cornwall," destined to be the most popular, though not the greatest, poet connected with the eddy. He first met Leigh Hunt in 1817, and by him "I was introduced to Keats, Peacock, Hazlitt, Coulson, Novello (the composer of music), and to Charles Lamb. Hazlitt took me to Haydon and Charles Lloyd; and at Charles Lamb's evening parties I found Talfourd, Manning, and the renowned Samuel Taylor Coleridge." Procter was the friend of Hunt and Haydon, but saw Keats "only two or three times before his departure for Italy." In fact, this amiable and popular young writer belonged only incidentally to the group, and after 1820, when he had become famous, associated

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fully as much with the Holland House poets, Rogers, Campbell, and Moore, as with them.\*

— Shelley went to Italy in 1818, Keats and Severn in 1821, Hunt in 1822. After that, though a social group remained, its literary glory was past. Lamb, Procter, and Reynolds were drawn into a kindred and closely related eddy, that of the *London Magazine*. Eventually, Procter abandoned poetry for married happiness and Reynolds left it for the law. With the exception of "Barry Cornwall," not one of them had gained, in art, poetry, or prose, either wealth or general recognition. They were destined to be the chief molding force in English poetry for nearly a century; but in 1820 John Bull would have heard of their future with a contemptuous stare.

The life that they led was utterly different from that of the Scotch or Lake or Holland House poets. Instead of the wild grandeur of Skiddaw and lonely majesty of Winander they saw, in the words of Hazlitt, "Hampstead and Highgate, with their hanging gardens and lofty terraces, and Primrose Hill nestling beneath them, in green, pastoral luxury, the delight of the Cockneys, the aversion of Sir Walter and his merry men." Everything around them was uneventful, ungigantic, pretty, and commonplace. There is something pathetic in hearing Hunt cry at the age of thirty-eight: "The ALPS! It was the first time I had seen mountains." And he adds in unconscious comment on the surroundings that had encouraged his own too feminine verse: "I seemed to meet for the first time a grand poetical thought in a material shape." Those peaks were so unlike his own picture of Hampstead:

woods that let mansions through,  
And cottaged vales with pillowy fields beyond,  
And clump of darkening pines, and prospects blue.

Scott among his ruined peels and frowning Trossachs is equally unlike Cowden Clarke's description of himself at Highgate, "in that

\* For some further details regarding this group, see chapter III of Sidney Colvin's "John Keats" (1917) and chapter XVI of Roger Ingpen's "Shelley in England" (1917), both of which books were published after this chapter was written.



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pretty suburban spot, then green with tall trees and shrub-grown gardens and near adjoining meadows. Pleasant were the walks taken arm-in-arm with such a host and entertainer as Leigh Hunt. Sometimes . . . past a handsome white detached house in a shrubbery with a long low gallery built out"; or "on through the pretty bowery lane—then popularly known as Millfield Lane, but called in his circle Poets' Lane, frequented as it was by himself, Shelley, Keats, and Coleridge."

Their social life was different from that of the other groups. They alone had the informal, amusing, but often inspiring atmosphere of literary bohemia. Their social life mingled together the different arts as was not done elsewhere until the days of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Poets and critics argued in Haydon's studio while he sketched; in Italy Severn painted pictures from the verse of Keats; in England the two had strolled together through the paintings of the National Gallery and the sculpture galleries of the British Museum. All alike listened to the music of the Novellos; and Haydon, the arch-enthusiast over the Elgin Marbles, made his comrades bow in devotion before those noble examples of Greek statuary. Cowden Clarke gives a graphic picture of their life. "The glorious feasts of sacred music at the Portuguese Chapel in South Street, Grosvenor Square, where Vincent Novello was organist, and introduced the masses of Mozart and Haydn for the first time in England, and where the noble old Gregorian hymn tunes and responses were chanted to perfection by a small but select choir drilled and cultivated by him; the exquisite evenings of Mozartian operatic and chamber music at Vincent Novello's own house, where Leigh Hunt, Shelley, Keats, and the Lambs were invited guests; the brilliant supper parties at the alternate dwellings of the Novellos, the Hunts, and the Lambs, who had mutually agreed that bread and cheese, with celery, and Elia's immortalized 'Lutheran beer,' were to be the sole cates provided; the meetings at the theater, when Munden, Dowton, Liston, Bannister, Elliston, and Fanny Kelly were on the stage; and the picnic repasts enjoyed together by appointment in the fields that then lay spread in green breadth and luxuriance between the west-end of Oxford Street and the western

slope of Hampstead Hill—are things never to be forgotten.” This was between 1816 and 1817. In July, 1819, Hunt wrote to Mary Shelley: “I see a good deal of Lamb, Hazlitt, Coulson, the Novellos, etc., but as much at their own house as at mine, or rather more just now. We give no dinners as we used. Our two other out-of-door amusements are the theatre (an involuntary one), and taking our books and sandwiches, and spending a day in the fields,—which we do often.”

No one would venture to say how far the literature of the group was the product of their environment, how far of common feelings existing beforehand in all its members, how far of Hunt's influence. All three forces had their part. Lamb's prose has more kinship to the genial informality of Hunt's essays than is generally recognized; and the two men had been associating and publishing through the same channels for nearly a decade before Lamb reached his high-water mark as *Elia*. Definite and numerous likenesses can be traced between the poetry of Hunt and much of the verse by Reynolds, Webb, Keats, and Procter, with more questionable traces in a few poems of Shelley. It must be remembered, however, that in a great metropolis with wide range of choice in acquaintance, men of similar tastes tend to gravitate toward each other; and what seems to be imitation is often merely the result of like minds affiliating together. All the Holland House poets imitated Pope, but most of them had done so before they became Holland House poets. If the Hunt circle wrote as they did partly because they saw much of each other and lived much in the suburbs, it is probably also true that they sought each other's company and turned much to the suburbs because of their natural taste.

Many members of the eddy were acquaintances rather than friends, held together by their common love of Keats or Hunt, and at times there were bitter “rifts within the lute”; yet unquestionably there was a considerable amount of communal literary activity. Hunt and Keats on a challenge wrote rival sonnets “On the Grasshopper and the Cricket.” Keats and Brown collaborated in the drama of “*Otho the Great*.” Hunt and Hazlitt wrote “The Round Table” together, the essays appearing in Hunt's *Examiner*. Shelley's



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"To the Nile" was written in competition with Keats and Hunt, and his "Revolt of Islam" in generous rivalry with Keats's "Endymion." Keats's "Sleep and Poetry" was composed in Hunt's library, and the last sixty or seventy lines are an inventory of the art garniture of the room. Procter's "Sicilian Story" and Keats's "Isabella" retell the same tale from Boccaccio; and Reynolds's "Garden of Florence" and "Ladye of Provence" are tales from the same source, tales that Keats and Reynolds planned together. Hunt's "Literary Pocket-book" (1819-22) was a group publication, containing short poems and prose pieces by Cowden Clarke, Shelley, Keats, Procter, Charles Ollier, Hunt himself, Cornelius Webb, Lloyd, and others. We have fragmentary records of critical discussions between Haydon and Hazlitt, Hunt and Keats, Hunt and Shelley, Keats and Severn. Each writer kept his own individuality, yet in many details would not have written as he did had he not been part of the literary eddy around Leigh Hunt.

One of the most marked characteristics of the "school" was its delight in luxurious surrender to the joys of the senses. "Oh for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts," cried Keats, and in 1818: "I have been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious, and a love for philosophy." The next year Hunt wrote to Shelley: "The other day I had a delicious sleep in a haycock. These green fields and blue skies throw me into a kind of placid intoxication. . . . There is a sort of kind and beautiful sensuality in it which softens the cuts and oppressiveness of intellectual perception." Hunt's "Story of Rimini," Keats's earlier poems, and some of Reynolds and Procter are full of this mood. It is in itself an exceedingly poetical one, but when reduced to composition fails to develop either mental content or moral force, and becomes indeed the flesh and blood of poetry, but the flesh and blood without the bones.

More unfortunate as a group characteristic was the use of language. Hunt was one of the most just appraisers of contemporary literature that ever lived, yet, curiously enough, his mind was at the same time woefully prolific in bad theories of art. All his good judgment seemed to revive at the sight of something already done and vanish before something yet to do. He evolved a vicious, forced,



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and artificial poetic diction, a matter fully as much of phrases as of words; and in this every one of his verse satellites except Shelley at times followed him. It consisted partly in the use of colloquial expressions for dignified poetry, partly in coining of unnatural and unidiomatic expressions, and so ran into two extremes at once. Thus Hunt talks about "the clumpy bays" and "the gazel with his lamp-ing eyes." Keats tells of a priest "begirt with ministring looks," and mothers who fill their script with "needments." Reynolds can speak of a lady's "easy shoulder" and her hand "so sonnet-sweet." This, however, was mere froth above the seething ideas in the literary melting pot; and these superficial blemishes might be ignored, had not *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* by savage emphasis on them made them part of literary history. The poets in question were outgrowing their defects; and Hunt criticised in Keats the very faults which his own example had encouraged.

Every group or eddy so far mentioned had some metre which it employed frequently and other groups rarely, and which became to a moderate degree characteristic of it. The Bristol and Lake poets clung to blank verse, which they used in non-dramatic poetry more than all their contemporaries combined. The Scotch authors loved the varying ballad metres and closely related octosyllabics. For all London poets the most characteristic metre was some variety of the pentameter couplet, whether the polished and compact verse of Pope or the fluid and easy style of Chaucer, both of whom had been London men, and had left in their former haunts a tradition more vividly alive than elsewhere. The Holland House authors preferred either the pure Pope tradition or Crabbe's narrative variant, which Byron used in so many romantic tales. The Hunt group never imitated Pope but made freer the freedom of Dryden, or preferred, as Keats put it modestly,

To stammer where old Chaucer us'd to sing.

With the influence of Chaucer they mingled that of Spenser. He was *par excellence* the literary idol of this group, as Milton was of the Stowey or Lake poets, and Pope or Addison of the Holland House writers. Leigh Hunt at twelve imitated Spenser in several hundred

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lines of a poem called "The Fairy Ring." In 1813 he "never stepped out-of-doors without a book in my hand, mostly a volume of Spenser or Milton." His oldest daughter "was christened Mary after my mother, and Florimel after one of Spenser's heroines." Procter, writing of a period some years later, tells us that Hunt "liked Milton more, and Spenser far more, than Shakespeare," and that he had a line from "The Faerie Queene" in gilt letters over the door of his study. The boy Keats, three or four years before he met Hunt, went through the first volume of that poets' poem "as a young horse would through a spring meadow—ramping." His earliest known verses are "Lines in Imitation of Spenser." He inspired the devoted Severn with the same enthusiasm. When it was announced that the theme for the Grand Prize in Historical Painting would be Book I, Canto X, of "The Faerie Queene," Keats and Severn felt that the world and its opportunities were now at their feet; and the latter eventually won the prize, his first artistic triumph. The stanza of Spenser was only occasionally used by Hunt and his friends; but they had so filled themselves with the atmosphere of "The Faerie Queene" that their pentameter couplets often seem more like it than the nine-line stanzas of "Childe Harold." Their favorite metre was a flower from Chaucer's garden cross-fertilized with Spenserian pollen.

It must be remembered that the distinction between their couplets and those of Rogers, Byron, Moore, and Campbell, though generally valid, was not always marked. That particular metre was then in a stage of rapid transition; and Pope's "Dunciad," Byron's "English Bards," Rogers's "Human Life," Byron's "Corsair," Moore's "Veiled Prophet," Hunt's "Rimini," and Keats's "Endymion" would read like steps in a gradual evolution, did not social and chronological facts indicate otherwise. The general line of cleavage, however, is reasonably obvious, even if Hunt did say that after "Rimini" he had the pleasure "of seeing all the reigning poets, without exception, break up their own heroic couplets into freer modulation (which they never afterwards abandoned)."

This romantic variation of the couplet, as it has been called, with its run-on lines and couplets, its feminine endings and lightly stressed endings, with its luxury and languor, its occasional mawk-

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ishness and unfailing music, plays a large part in the volumes of all the "suburban" poets. Hunt used it for "Rimini," "Hero and Leander," "Abou Ben Adhem," "Jaffar," and many a less-known poem. Keats, unlike Hunt, did not usually rise to his highest level in this rhythm, but about half of his non-dramatic verse is written in it: "I stood tiptoe," "Calidore," "Sleep and Poetry," "Endymion," and the rhyming Epistles. "Lamia" is the same movement braced into vigor by Dryden. It was in this medium that he voiced the prayer which unpitying gods refused:

O for ten years, that I may overwhelm  
Myself in poesy; so I may do the deed  
That my own soul has to itself decreed.  
Then will I pass the countries that I see  
In long perspective, and continually  
Taste their pure fountains. First the realm I'll pass  
Of Flora, and old Pan: sleep in the grass,  
Feed upon apples red, and strawberries,  
And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees.

Reynolds plays on the same instrument in "The Garden of Florence":

O, lovers are long watchers of the night!  
Watchers of coiling darkness—of the light—  
Of the cold window-pane, whereon the moon  
Casteth her sallow smile in night's mid-noon—  
Of the unwearied stars that watch on high  
As though they were lone lovers in the sky.

Practically the same metre, only varied by occasional alternate rhymes, is the favorite in narrative of Procter, the main note, for example, though with numerous variations, in the "Sicilian Tale." He used it in "Marcian Colonna," and in many shorter poems of that volume, as, for example, in "A Voice":

Oh! what a voice is silent. It was soft  
As mountain-echoes, when the winds aloft—  
The gentle winds of summer meet in caves;  
Or when in sheltered places the white waves



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Are 'wakened into music, as the breeze  
Dimples and stems the current: or as trees  
Shaking their green locks in the days of June:  
Or Delphic girls when to the maiden moon  
They sang harmonious pray'rs: or sounds that come  
(However near) like a faint distant hum  
Out of the grass, from which mysterious birth  
We guess the busy secrets of the earth.  
—Like the low voice of Syrinx, when she ran  
Into the forests from Arcadian Pan.

In addition to their worship of sensuousness and of Spenser, their artificial diction and luscious metre, a nobler badge of the group was their love of the Greeks and of the Greek sense of beauty, though that cult at times degenerated in their hands into a beauty-worship almost decadent. The eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth had shown little genuine knowledge of Greek art and literature, little tendency to imitate what was noblest in their technique or spirit. In fact Joseph Cottle, who, as an ex-publisher, should have some idea of public taste, wrote in the Preface to his second edition of "Alfred": "Whoever in these times, founds a machinery on the mythology of the Greeks, will do so at his peril." During the second decade of the new century there began a marked stream of Hellenized poetry, which has continued ever since. It ran at first in two currents, the popular one of Byron and the unpopular one of the "suburban" poets, the latter, as frequently happens, eventually becoming the greater of the two. Apparently the stream of influence began with Haydon. In 1808, eight years before the Elgin Marbles were placed on public exhibition, he was admitted to see those noble examples of classic sculpture in the owner's private rooms. "I shall never forget the horses' heads," he tells us, "the feet in the metopes! I felt as if a divine truth had blazed inwardly upon my mind, and I knew that they would at last rouse the art of Europe from its slumber in the darkness." At his next visit he brought the famous painter Fuseli, who shared his enthusiasm, and strode about crying in his broken English, "De Greeks were godes! de Greeks were godes!" For three months Haydon drew from these models,

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working twelve, fourteen, and fifteen hours at a time, and read Homer in English to stir his fancy for the work. How much of this enthusiasm he communicated to his friends Hunt and Hazlitt we are left to guess; but they both grew to share it. In 1819 Hunt wrote to Mary Shelley: "What divine writers those Greek tragedians are! I should quarrel more with the unjust and shocking superstition about history, upon which their writings are founded, were they not perpetually yearning after every species of beauty, moral and physical." In the Preface to his "Foliage" (1818) he tells us that "the main features of the book are a love of sociality, of the country, and of the fine imagination of the Greeks," and speaks of "that beautiful mythology, which it is not one of the least merits of the new school to be restoring to its proper estimation." Hazlitt in "Table Talk" says of statues that he "never liked any till I saw the Elgin marbles." Elsewhere he declared that "Rome and Athens filled a place in the history of mankind, which can never be occupied again." In words that remind us of Keats's "Grecian Urn," Hazlitt said of Greek statues: "The sense of perfect form nearly occupies the whole mind, and hardly suffers it to dwell on any other feeling. It seems enough for them *to be*, without acting or suffering. Their forms are ideal, spiritual. Their beauty is power. By their beauty they are raised above the frailties of pain or passion; by their beauty they are deified." In 1816, the very year in which the Hunt group drew to a head, the Elgin Marbles were placed on public exhibition in the British Museum. Keats, says William Sharp, "went again and again to see the Elgin marbles, and would sit for an hour or more at a time beside them rapt in revery. On one such occasion Severn came upon the young poet, with eyes shining so brightly and face so lit up by some visionary rapture, that he stole quietly away without intrusion." Earlier in 1816 Haydon had published in Hunt's *Examiner* (as well as in *The Champion*) a fiery defence of the celebrated marbles, in which he ranked them "above all other works of art in the world." In the meanwhile we must not overlook the influence of Byron, who had been the friend of Hunt during the latter's imprisonment and for four years the most popular poet in Great Britain. The second canto of "Childe Harold" was full of

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Hellenic atmosphere. So were the opening lines of "The Giaour" and of the second canto of "Abydos," poems which Byron had sent to Hunt during the latter's imprisonment.

Contemporary with the influence of Byron and Greek statuary came also that of German romantic criticism. In 1815 the lectures of A. W. Schlegel appeared in an English translation, and the following spring were reviewed by Hazlitt at great length in *The Edinburgh*. The review said that Schlegel's work had "too much of everything, but especially of Greece"; yet in a year or two Hazlitt had been converted to a Hellenism as reverent as that of Schlegel himself. The Grecian-enthusiasm of the Hunt circle was the English analogue of the Hellenic tendency in Germany a few years earlier, in the work of Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin, and the romantic critics.

The result was a wave of Hellenism which touched almost every poet and painter of Hunt's group. He himself retold the story of Hero and Leander and in "The Nymphs" gave a poetic panorama of "fair-limbed Dryads," Hamadryads, Napeads, the Limniad "who takes Her pleasure in the lakes," and "The Oreads that frequent the lifted mountains." Peacock, in 1818, just after his brief and rather tenuous connection with the group, published "Rhododaphne," a wildly romantic legend of ancient Hellas, with palaces that vanish, malignant deities, and dead brides that come to life. Procter's "Flood of Thessaly" (1823) develops in respectable Miltonic verse the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha, ending with Deucalion's Miltonic vision of the coming glories of ancient Hellas. Procter before this had written a brief masque, "The Rape of Proserpine," and pastoral dialogues based on Greek story, also a short poem "On the Statue of Theseus" (one of the Elgin Marbles) ending:

Methinks,

(So perfect is the Phidian stone) his sire  
The sea-god Neptune, hath in anger stopped  
The current of life, and with his trident touch  
Hath struck him into marble.

Charles Wells in his "Stories After Nature" (1822), a collection of crude yet poetical prose narratives, has two or three tales from



ancient Greece; and in one of them, "Dion," he says that the original story "has the passion, the dignity, and nature of the Elgin Marbles." Swinburne has pointed out in this little book "the perceptible influence of Leigh Hunt in some of the stories." Lamb has a similar allusion to the famous sculptures in his essay on beggars. Even Reynolds wrote a volume entitled "The Naiad," though there is nothing very Greek about it. Haydon preferred Hebraic to Hellenic subjects for his paintings; but he said of the Elgin Marbles: "I gained from these sublime relics the leading principles of my practice." Severn was hardly launched as an artist before his journey to Italy; but after that he painted several scenes, indifferently good, on Greek subjects: "The Death of Alcibiades," "Alexander the Great Reading Homer," and "Greek Hill-Shepherds Rescuing a Lamb from an Eagle," the last founded on a passage in Keats's "Hymn to Pan." He tells us that on their voyage to Italy, Keats "made it all live again, that old antique world when the Greek galleys and Tyrhenian sloops brought northward strange tales of what was happening in Hellas and the mysterious East." And Rome after their arrival would never have been a joy to the young painter "had it not been for Keats's talks with me about the Greek spirit,—the Religion of the Beautiful, the Religion of Joy, as he used to call it. All that was finest in sculpture—and, as I came to see directly or indirectly, all that was finest too in painting, in *everything*—was due to that supreme influence." Lamb tells us how Procter radiated a similar, though more transitory, enthusiasm. "Barry Cornwall has his tritons and his nereids gambolling before him in nocturnal visions. . . . It was after reading the noble Dream of this poet, that my fancy ran strong upon these marine spectra. . . . Methought I was upon the ocean billows at some sea nuptials, riding and mounted high, with the customary train sounding their conches before me."

✓ If there was so much Hellenism among the minor figures of the eddy, we are not surprised that it permeates the best work of the two principal figures, Keats and Shelley, "both Greek poets," as Severn wrote of them years after their deaths. The Greek part of Keats appears to have been born in him. As a boy he lived with

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Tooke's "Pantheon," Lemprière's "Classical Dictionary," and Spence's "Polymetis" until he almost knew them by heart. Yet his first volume, though it contains a number of incidental allusions to classic mythology, buries these under a mass of pretty but childish pseudo-medievalism, wherein neither thought, story, nor atmosphere are genuinely Hellenic.

In "Endymion," however, though the hazy glamour of Spenser is over it all, one breathes true Athenian air. "I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece, and dulled its brightness," wrote the author in his Preface. The suburban prettiness of his environment was none too much like that of the great ancients, where

The mountains look on Marathon,  
And Marathon looks on the sea.

Instead he opens:

So I will begin  
Now while I cannot hear the city's din;  
Now while the early budders are just new.

Instead of Alcman's "peaks and ravines of the mountains," "headlands and torrent beds," Keats turns Mt. Latmos into a Hampstead park.

Paths there were many,  
Winding through palmy fern, and rushes fenny,  
And ivy banks; all leading pleasantly  
To a wide lawn.

But when he once gets under way, with Arethusa calling through the caverns and "the giant sea above," Hampstead gives place to Hellas.

Far as the mariner on highest mast  
Can see all round upon the calmed vast,  
So wide was Neptune's hall. . . . They stood in dreams  
Till Triton blew his horn. The palace rang;  
The Nereids danced; the Syrens faintly sang,  
And the great Sea-King bowed his dripping head.

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In the volume of 1820 "Lamia," the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," "Ode to Psyche," and "Hyperion" are as nobly Hellenic as any poems in the language. The pretty suburban flower gardens are forgotten; and the poet can write of conflicts and tragedies,

Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe.

Early influences on Shelley had not been Hellenizing. His boyhood love in literature was for the novels of Ann Radcliffe or similar pabulum; and his prentice work in both poetry and prose was at times an orgy of the crudest, most hair-raising Gothic romance. Then Godwin's "Political Justice" revolutionized his whole nature. "It materially influenced my character," Shelley wrote to the author in 1812, "and I rose from its perusal a wiser and a better man. I was no longer the votary of romance. . . . I beheld, in short, that I had duties to perform." In this temper he produced the anarchistic "Queen Mab," which gave more evidence of increased virtue than of increased wisdom. It was in this mood that he visited the Lake region in 1812. Southey, to whom several contemporaries agree that Shelley had a marked personal resemblance, wrote of the incident: "Here is a man at Keswick who acts upon me as my own ghost would do. He is just what I was in 1794." Then came another revolution, which produced the beautiful but by no means Grecian "Alastor"; and soon after that Shelley became intimate with Hunt. Hardly a trace of special enthusiasm for the Greeks appears in Shelley's poetry either before or during that intimacy; but immediately after its end and his journey to Italy in 1818 he began lighting his torches at Hellenic altar-fires. It is a natural assumption that the Greek enthusiasm of the group woke the dormant Grecian in his soul. In 1819 he wrote to Peacock: "O, but for that series of wretched wars which terminated in the Roman conquest of the world; but for the Christian religion, which put the finishing stroke on the ancient system; but for those changes that conducted Athens to its ruin,—to what an eminence might not humanity have arrived!" Later in the same year he wrote to John Gisborne: "Were not the Greeks a glorious people? What is there, as Job says of the Leviathan, like unto them? If the army of Nicias had not been

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defeated under the walls of Syracuse; if the Athenians had, acquiring Sicily, held the balance between Rome and Carthage, sent garrisons to the Greek colonies in the South of Italy, Rome might have been all that its intellectual condition entitled it to be, a tributary, not the conqueror of Greece." In his posthumous "Essay on the Revival of Literature" Shelley speaks of "Grecian literature,—the finest the world has ever produced."

These utterances went hand in hand with creative poetry on Greek themes. The drama of "Hellas" was suggested by Aeschylus' "Persians," and, with all its faults, reveals the great model in the noble closing chorus.

Another Athens shall arise,  
And to remoter time  
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,  
The splendor of its prime.

Apollo walks "over the mountains and the waves." Arethusa leaves "her couch of snows In the Acroceraunian mountains." In the "Hymn of Pan" we are among

The Sileni, and Sylvans, and Fauns,  
And the Nymphs of the woods and waves.

Yet Shelley at bottom, unlike Keats, had more Greek enthusiasm than Greek spirit. This fact becomes plainest in the "Prometheus Unbound." The play begins as a Greek drama, and after the first act drifts rapidly away from both action and psychology into a medley of vaguely connected, though beautiful, atmospheric outbursts. It is like a comet, a burning head of drama, trailing a tenuous mist of song. On the lyric and emotional mind of Shelley, so much less favorable to thorough comprehension of any foreign literature than the more narrative, descriptive, and analytic inspiration of Keats, this abrupt inpouring of ancient Athenian culture, like a cataract falling across a sunbeam, produced a glorious iridescence, which is associated with the cause but hardly akin to it. Had the two poets lived, we believe that the Hellenism of Shelley would have proved a passing enthusiasm, that of Keats a lasting faith.

From 1815 to 1822 nearly all poetry on Hellenic themes came

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from the Hunt Eddy. Wordsworth produced his noble "Laodamia" and "Dion," both written about 1814, and in the following year said of the Elgin Marbles: "A man must be senseless as a clod, or as perverse as a fiend, not to be enraptured with them." But this in him was only a temporary ripple. Byron's enthusiasm, which was more that of the traveler than that of the true Hellenic *vates*, lay dormant from "The Corsair" in 1814 to "The Isles of Greece" in 1821. There was a growing interest in Grecian material, as in all things foreign and historic; and this, with Byron's example, called from Mrs. Hemans a lengthy poem, "Modern Greece," as well as a number of brief lyrics; but the chief credit for enriching modern poetry from Greek models and mythology must rest with Keats and Shelley and their less-known fellow workers who helped to create the atmosphere in which they composed.

Two other literary movements which the Hunt Eddy helped to forward, but which will be dwelt on separately later, were the Italian and the Elizabethan. Hunt, Keats, Shelley, Reynolds, Procter, Lloyd, and Wells all at times drew material from the great Italian quarry. Hunt from early manhood had been an enthusiast for Italy and its literature. As a result, probably, of his friendship, Haydon about 1812 "was seized with a fury for Italian" that vented its temporary enthusiasm on the sonnets of Petrarch. Their friends, the Novellos, were partly of Italian blood. Lamb, Hazlitt, Procter, Wells, and Cowden Clarke were connected with the growing study of the Elizabethan dramatists. This group of "suburban" poets, with all its faults, formed the watershed where old influences died out and new streams of influence flowed down into the later nineteenth century. Most of what afterward proved great germinated with them. Among other tendencies, they foreshadowed the later pre-Raphaelites. As already noted, their social life approximated the pre-Raphaelite type in its union of different arts, music, painting, sculpture, and poetry. Professor Elton finds "the movement of parts of 'Jason' or 'The Earthly Paradise'" forecast in Keats's "Lamia"; and his "Eve of St. Mark" "is no collateral or remote, but a direct and near ancestor of Tennyson's 'St. Agnes' Eve' and the drawings by Millais and his companions." In 1847 Ruskin

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and Severn were in sympathetic correspondence over "the want of feeling for Religious Art in England"; and Ruskin was pouring in Severn's apparently sympathetic ear his pre-Raphaelite propaganda: "I fully anticipate seeing the Carraccis and Murillos and Carlo Dolcis, and coarse copies of Titian and Rubens, and all the tribe of the potsherd painters, and drunkard painters, cleared out one by one from our Galleries; their places supplied by Angelico, Francia, and Perugino."

Yet this eddy, so rich in suggestion for great poetry, was not of a nature to bring great poetry into perfect maturity. It was a hothouse nursery for literary plants, which could only reach their full blossom when transplanted elsewhere. Of Shelley's best work, "Alastor" and the "Hymn to the Intellectual Beauty" were written before he became identified with the group, all the rest after he went to Italy. The first two volumes of Keats, though they do not deserve the scathing contempt of Swinburne, would never make the author great; his third volume, on which his fame depends, was written in a spirit of decided revulsion against the atmosphere of the Hunt circle. By the end of 1818 this is his mood: "Hunt keeps on in his old way—I am completely tired of it all. He has lately published a Pocket Book called the Literary Pocket-Book—full of the most sickening stuff you can imagine"; or again: "The night we went to Novello's there was a complete set to of music and punning. I was so completely tired of it that if I were to follow my own inclinations I should never meet any one of that set again, not even Hunt." Allowance must be made for Keats's morbid condition—, he himself contributed some of the "sickening stuff" to the Pocket-Book—, and he had been influenced by a breach between Hunt and Haydon; yet it is unquestionable that the style and models of his later poems diverge from those of the Hunt group, retaining certain traces of that mother movement mingled with more virile blood. We find the same attitude in Shelley, who owed much to the Hunt circle yet did best when away from it. In 1820 he wrote from Italy: "Keats's new volume has arrived to us, and the fragment called 'Hyperion' promises for him that he is destined to become one of the first writers of the age. His other things are imperfect enough,



and, what is worse, written in the bad sort of style which is becoming fashionable among those who fancy that they are imitating Hunt and Wordsworth."

All the men connected with this eddy were the subject of press hostility as no group of English authors before had been in literary history. Even Procter, popular both as a poet and a man, was attacked by *Blackwood's* for his effeminacy. Lamb was a "Cockney Scribbler," Haydon the "Raphael of the Cockneys," and Hazlitt's "pimpled face" gleamed like Bardolph's nose through the shadows of vituperation. Keats was a "bardling" and a "mannikin"; Hunt, author of the "smutty 'Story of Rimini.'" Even death did not appease that hostility. When the news of Shelley's drowning reached London, an evening journal remarked, "He will now know whether there is a Hell or not." The pathetic inscription on Keats's tombstone for years evoked only the flippant comment that enraged Severn: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water, *and his works in milk and water.*"

The original cause of these attacks was political. Hunt had been ✓ a champion of the Liberal party, and often savage and personal in his remarks, thereby drawing down on all around him the Tory lightnings of *Blackwood's* and *The Quarterly*. But there was social prejudice also. The Holland House poets, who at times were friendly and at other times might have been, often showed hostility to all but Shelley and Procter on the ground that the others were "Cockneys," poets of a life that lacked breeding and cosmopolitan breadth. This aversion was increased in Byron and Campbell by a partly erroneous belief that the "Cockneys" were militant enemies of their idol Pope. Also behind the hostility of *Blackwood's* and the passive acquiescence in it of Scott—so unlike his usual generous nature—there was a certain amount of half-unconscious race antipathy. The "Cockneys" were South of England men—except Hazlitt, who was Irish, and the Novellos, who were part Italian. They belonged to another world than that of the rugged north, and when facing it could neither understand nor be understood. Keats felt no enthusiasm about his Scotch trip, and found that "the clouds, the sky, the houses, all seem anti-Grecian and anti-Charlemagnish." Hunt had

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written earlier: "There is a vein in Smollett—a Scotch vein—which is always disgusting to people of delicacy." "I have been trying all my life to like Scotchmen, and am obliged to desist from the experiment in despair," said Lamb in "Imperfect Sympathies," voicing one prejudice at least, if nothing else, which he shared with his fellow Londoner, Dr. Johnson. In those days the jealousy between the two national capitals was a very genuine thing. Back of all this, there were literary reasons for the Hunt group's unpopularity. Their bad poetry often *was* unmanly, and their good poetry was a voice crying in the wilderness twenty years too soon. The storm that broke over them was unjust and regrettable, but might easily have been expected. Perhaps too much has already been said about this unhappy war between literary brethren. John Wilson in 1834 generously retracted all past attacks on the "Cockneys"; and it is to his dignified words that the curtain should fall on bygone tragedy and bygone billingsgate: "The animosities are mortal, but the humanities live forever."

## CHAPTER IX

### *The Elizabethan Current and The London Magazine*

#### I

CONNECTED with the eddy around Hunt, and therefore best taken up immediately after it, are two minor literary movements, one a thin, struggling stream for many years, the other a brief but more widespreading eddy, into which part of the first may be said to have disembogued.

The line of Elizabethan development ran tangent to the circles of Bristol and Lake poets, "Cockneys" and *London Magazine* authors, touching them all without becoming thoroughly identified with any one. It began as a scholarly and interpretative movement, and in that field rendered its greatest services to mankind; but it later developed, or modified in their development, a number of poetical closet dramas. There had been during the late eighteenth century an increase in popular interest about Shakespeare, and a marked improvement in textual criticism. It remained for the early nineteenth century to furnish a profound analysis of Shakespeare's drama as literature; to resurrect forgotten masterpieces of his humbler brethren, and to call from modern pens a large amount of deeply felt, though not wholly successful, Elizabethan imitation.

—The current began with Lamb, Coleridge, and Hazlitt, all of whom had some connection at different periods with both the Bristol and "Cockney" eddies. Lamb led the way. In 1796, in the golden days of Pantisocracy, he wrote to Coleridge: "I writhe with indignation when in books of Criticism, where common place quotation is heaped upon quotation, I find no mention of such men as Massinger, or B. and Fl., men with whom succeeding Dramatic Writers (Otway alone excepted) can bear no manner of comparison.

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Stupid Knox hath noticed none of 'em among his extracts." In 1801 Lamb wrote to Godwin advocating the use of scenes and incidents from old dramas, and at that very time he was trying to write a new "As You Like It" in his own abortive "John Woodvil." Three years later we find in Southey's correspondence: "I saw Longman yesterday. . . . I am trying to make him publish a collection of the scarce old English poets, which will be the fittest thing in the world for Lamb to manage, if he likes it." This troubling of the mental waters in 1807 evoked the charming though not epoch-making "Tales from Shakespeare" by Charles and Mary Lamb jointly; and the next year Lamb published his "Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets who lived about the time of Shakespeare." The latter is a milestone in the history of Elizabethan influence. Its Preface tells us how far the dust of oblivion had gathered on many a great Elizabethan: "More than a third part of the following specimens are from plays which are to be found only in the British Museum and in some scarce private libraries." The editor speaks of Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and of Massinger (whom Gifford had edited in 1805) as well known; and wishes "to exhibit them in the same volume with the more impressive scenes of old Marlowe, Heywood, Tourneur, Webster, Ford, and others. To show what we have slighted, while beyond all proportion we have cried up one or two favorite names." Years of loving self-sacrifice went into that volume. "Do you remember," said Mary Lamb to her brother, "the brown suit, which you made to hang upon you, till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so threadbare—and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher, which you dragged home late at night from Barker's in Covent Garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase?" The changes in literary taste produced by this book were slow in appearance but far-reaching. Incidentally, besides its significance for Elizabethans, this work was apparently part of a sudden increase in books of selections. In 1804 Campbell declared: "It is a hiatus in British Literature that we have no specimens of our best poetry"; yet Lamb, at about the time of his own publication, wrote: "Specimens are becoming fashionable. We have—Specimens of Ancient

English Poets, Specimens of Modern English Poets, Specimens of Ancient English Prose Writers, without end."

That this kind of work was "the fittest thing in the world for Lamb to manage" we have abundant testimony. The great past was more alive for him than the present. "I am out of the world of readers," he cried a few months after the "Specimens" appeared. "I hate all that do read, for they read nothing but reviews and new books. I gather myself up unto the old things." "I cannot write in the modern style, if I try ever so hard," was his defence when Mary thought his serenata "a little too old-fashioned in the manner"; and "when my sonnet was rejected, I exclaimed, 'Damn the age; I will write for Antiquity.'" "His soul delighted in communion with ancient generations," Procter tells us; "more especially with men who had been unjustly forgotten."

Lamb's work was followed by the lecture courses of Coleridge and Hazlitt in London. Of Coleridge's first series in 1808, little has been preserved. In the winter of 1811-12 he spoke "on Shakespeare and Milton in illustration of the Principles of Poetry, and their application as grounds of Criticism to the most popular works of later English Poets, those of the living included." The fragmentary records, says J. Dykes Campbell, suffice to show that his audiences "probably heard the finest literary criticism which has ever been given in English." The popular effect was considerable; and Byron, who attended, mentions "Coleridge, who is a sort of rage at present." In 1818 the inspired but unpunctual lecturer had more doubtful success introducing his audience to Shakespeare and poetical literature, Hazlitt at the same time, occasionally on the same evenings, interpreting the English poets. The previous year had seen Hazlitt's "Characters of Shakespeare's Plays," and Coleridge's tragi-comedy "Zapolya," which was as much like Shakespeare's "Winter's Tale" as a bad play can be like a good one. In 1820 Hazlitt delivered his Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth.

The work of Coleridge and Hazlitt differed from that of Lamb in two important respects. Unlike him, they either ignored or underrated the minor Elizabethans, and were consistently wise and sympathetic only in their handling of the one supreme master.



Also, whereas the criticism of Lamb was a strictly indigenous product, that of his two friends was strongly tinctured with the thought of Germany, where the humanistic interpretation of Shakespeare had before 1812 advanced much farther than among his own countrymen. Coleridge, during his brief trip to Germany, had soaked himself in the thought of Lessing and Kant. While delivering his second course of lectures in 1812 he read the writings of A. W. Schlegel, the critical leader of the German Romantic School; and his own discourses on Shakespeare are filled with parallelisms to that writer. Hazlitt in 1816, before producing most of his own Elizabethan criticism, had reviewed Schlegel on the Drama in *The Edinburgh Review* at great length and with marked approval.

Meanwhile the lectures of those rich in brains were being aided by the printing press of one rich in cash. From 1813 to 1822 Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges, a would-be poet and a nobleman, but in spite of these handicaps a valuable aid to literature, operated his private printing establishment, the Lee Priory Press. It produced chiefly reprints of rare old books, among them poems of William Browne and Greene's "Groatsworth of Wit," and so rendered genuine service to old literature, especially the Elizabethan.

Hazlitt and Coleridge, obviously, were much influenced by Lamb, for so many years the friend of both; and Coleridge reciprocated by filling the Elizabethan books of "Elia" with scribbled annotations. "Many are those precious MSS. of his . . . legible in my Daniel; in old Burton; in Sir Thomas Browne; and those abstruser cogitations of the Greville," says Lamb in "The Two Races of Men." Hazlitt was also reacted on by one who about the time of his emergence as a literary critic became the friend of himself and Lamb, Bryan Waller Procter. This genial poet had, as a child, breathed in the love of Shakespeare from his nurse, a woman fallen from better days. Procter tells us that when Hazlitt "was about to write his Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth, he knew little or nothing of the dramatists of that time, with the exception of Shakespeare. He spoke to Charles Lamb, and to myself, who were supposed by many to be well acquainted with those ancient writers. I lent him about



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a dozen volumes, comprehending the finest of the old plays; and he then went down to Winterslow Hut, in Wiltshire, and after a stay of six weeks came back to London, fully impregnated with the subject, with his thoughts fully made up upon it, and with all his lectures written."

— In 1819 with his "Dramatic Scenes" Procter led the way in the new wave of Elizabethan imitations. Two years later he published his drama of "Mirandola," which had been acted successfully at Covent Garden Theater, with such able Shakespearean actors as Kemble and Macready in the leading rôles. "Mirandola" is in almost slavish imitation of plays like the "Love's Sacrifice" of John Ford, even using "abused" in its long-forgotten Elizabethan meaning of "deceived." The Prologue, by one of the author's friends, after praising the Elizabethans, tells the audience:

Of late some poets of true mind have writ  
Lines that have relished of the ancient wit;  
To-night, another,—not unknown—yet one  
Who feels that much is to be lost—and won,  
Comes with a few plain words, honestly told,  
Like those his mightier masters spoke of old.

Remembering how much the ancient dramatists drew from Italy, we need not be astonished if the Elizabethan and Italian currents often became one. In 1821 it is not at all surprising to find a play located in Italy, and one of the characters giving a eulogistic list of Italian authors:

These lines were strung  
By frenzied Tasso whom a princess scorned,  
And these flew forth from Ariosto's quill,  
And these sad Petrarch, who lamented long  
Laura, his love, once writ; and some there were  
Inscribed by great Boccaccio's golden pen.

If Procter's first play had appeared ten years earlier it would probably have been very different. Having no great literary merit to preserve it, it may gain an inglorious immortality as a straw showing which way the wind blew.

## THE ELIZABETHAN CURRENT

Jeffrey in reviewing Bryan Waller Procter's "Sicilian Story" said of his work in general: "Mr. Cornwall's style is chiefly moulded, and his versification modulated, on the pattern of Shakespeare, Marlow, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger. He has also copied something from Milton and Ben Jonson, and the amorous cavaliers of the Usurpation—and then, passing disdainfully over all the intermediate writers, has flung himself fairly into the arms of Lord Byron, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Leigh Hunt. . . . But really the materials harmonize very tolerably. . . . The natural bent of his genius is more like that of Leigh Hunt than any other author. . . . But he has better taste and better judgment." This pretty accurate verdict explains why that popular and kind-hearted poet will be found scattered through our book like the limbs of Medea's children. It also explains why his most prominent rôle may well be played in the present chapter. It was as a reviver of the Elizabethan models that he was first welcomed by the public. *The Literary Gazette* said that his "Dramatic Scenes" "give us the impression of a mind eminently rich in its knowledge of the finest era of the English mind." Leigh Hunt's *Examiner* found the author "evidently well acquainted with our old dramatists; but he writes after them like a true disciple, not at all like a servile imitator." In the words of *Blackwood's*, "the shade of Massinger himself might with pleasure hail his appearance in the world of imagination." Six of his brief "Dramatic Scenes" appeared in 1819, and the rest were written soon after, though not published for years. Like the dialogues of Landor or the work of his French contemporary Vitet, they give a single dramatic hour, not a character development; and in spite of lax run-on lines they still read better than the author's other work. In "Ludovico Sforza," which is prefaced by a quotation from Webster, one can hear the echo of that somber genius through Isabella's words over her dead victim:

I could grieve, almost,  
To see his ghastly stare. His eye is vague;  
Is motionless. How like those shapes he grows,  
That sit in stony whiteness over tombs,  
Memorials of their cold inhabitants.

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Juan like Othello kills an innocent wife in erring jealousy and then stabs himself. The quotations prefixed to the different "scenes" represent, besides Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Middleton. It was probably from Ford that "The Broken Heart" borrowed its title. In comparing these rather able fragments with the far "too lovey" narrative poems, one cannot help wishing that Procter had lived up to his own words:

He who feeds  
Upon Shakespearean pastures never needs  
The humbler food which springs from plains below.

Shelley's "Cenci," though original and Italian in its underlying conception, is full of Shakespearean mannerisms and echoes, which he may or may not have caught in the "Cockney" days from Procter, Lamb, and Hazlitt. Act IV especially is redolent of "Macbeth." In the much inferior dramatic fragment "Charles the First," the ghastly joking of Archy, the Court Fool, is a connecting link between Webster and Shelley's admirer Beddoes. Yet this tendency was only a passing ripple across the mind that conceived the "Prometheus." Shelley's reading during this period, as shown by the notes of his widow, was mainly Greek, and included hardly any of Shakespeare's fellow tragedians.

Keats's friend, Charles Armitage Brown, brought out a book, though not a very valuable one, entitled: "Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems. Being his Sonnets Clearly developed; with his Characters drawn chiefly from his Works." The author of "Endymion" himself was temporarily affected, and is thought to have borrowed in his long poem from Lyly's "Endimion," Drayton's "Man in the Moon," and poems of Fletcher, William Browne, and Ben Jonson. In 1824 Charles Wells, also the friend of Keats, and very probably the Elizabethan disciple of Lamb, Procter, and Hazlitt, published under an assumed name "Joseph and his Brethren." It drew its plot from the Bible, one of the few historical fields neglected by the great Elizabethan dramatists; but diction, blank verse, and character conception are obviously reminiscent of Peele, Mar-



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lowe, and Shakespeare. There are splendid word pictures in it, yet as a whole it is rather heavy reading; and the utter neglect shown by the public, though unjust, was not unnatural. The rich Oriental atmosphere reminds one of Gautier's "Romance of a Mummy," as well as of descriptions in Marlowe's "Tamburlaine."

Then came the honoured elders of the land,  
Whose sombre habits answered to their age,  
Wove of the ancient woof which sibyls love;—  
Their faces as old chronicles were mapped  
And furrowed with an age of mystic thought;  
Their snowy hair that mingled with their beards  
Flowed o'er their shadowy forms in many a fold,  
Covering their garments like a silver cloud  
As moonlight o'er some darksome sepulchre. . . .  
Each one was followed by his sacred charge,  
In silver cradles worked with lotus flowers,  
Wherein were shrined with reverential awe  
Emblems of Egypt since her antique days  
(As on her brazen pillars it is writ)  
Coeval with creation's misty age.

Meanwhile a more somber and powerful genius was at work, the poet Beddoes. He had several literary affiliations, but they were all of the most tenuous kind. His mother was the sister of Maria Edgeworth. His father, a famous physician, had been somewhat acquainted with the poets of the Bristol Eddy. He himself in his best creative period worshiped Shelley from afar, was one of the first to discover the greatness of that uncomprehended giant, and to forward the posthumous publication of his works. About 1823 he at least met Procter and corresponded with him later. Yet he came closely in touch with no literary man or literary group. Lonely as an asteroid in Chaos, he followed his eccentric orbit, the fragment of a greater poetical world that might have been. As his love and wide knowledge of the Elizabethan dramatists was formed in schoolboy days independently of all outside influences, it is impossible to say how far the laudatory reviews which his fellow Elizabethan disciples, Procter and Darley, gave to his early "Brides' Tragedy,"

encouraged him in the gloomy Websterian character of his later masterpiece. In 1821 he published the worthless "Improvisatore" and immature but highly poetical "Brides' Tragedy." Then he expatriated himself, body and soul, became an eccentric German physician, and dying in the middle of the nineteenth century left his one great work, "Death's Jestbook," to be published by his friends. It had been finished by 1829, and, though later revised, may justly be grouped with the plays before 1830. Perhaps the fact that he wrote it almost wholly in Germany influenced Beddoes in his choice of a German medieval theme.

Beddoes realized perfectly both the opportunities and limitations in this field of Elizabethan imitation. "The man who is to awaken the drama," he said, "must be a bold trampling fellow—no creeper into worm-holes—no reviver even, however good. These reanimations are vampire cold. Such ghosts as Marlowe, Webster, etc., are better dramatists, better poets, I daresay, than any contemporary of ours, but they are ghosts—the worm is in their pages—and we want to see something that our great grandsires did not know. . . . Just now the drama is a haunted ruin." But growing melancholy or misdirected powers seem to have raised an invisible barrier between the poet and the goal which he clearly visioned; he became "a reviver" "however good." None the less in that limited field he reigns supreme, a master of sepulchral atmosphere and sonorous blank verse. Unity of action he has none, but the unity of mood is perfect. And in that mood there is an element that is not primarily Elizabethan but belongs rather to the medieval or Oriental ascetic. The bold dramatists of good Queen Bess generally considered death an evil, to be faced but not sought. Beddoes considers it the one blessing in an evil world, the calm Nirvanah of the sepulcher. At eighteen he made a desolate mother cry:

Men call him Death, but Comfort is his name;

and the same mournfully healing thesis is that of "Death's Jestbook." To die is

The right of the deserving good old man  
To rest, his cheerful labor being done.

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The young girl Sibyl loves flowers

because these brief visitors to us  
Rise yearly from the neighborhood of the dead,  
To show us how far fairer and more lovely  
Their world is.

The ghosts

are afraid  
They would envy our delight,  
In our graves by glow-worm night.

The spectre Wolfram says that

The dead are ever good and innocent,  
And love the living;

and he reproaches Duke Melveric for daring

to call up into life,  
And the unholy world's forbidden sunlight,  
Out of his grave him who reposed softly.

Such an attitude might easily be suggested by Webster but is more hungry for death than he; longs for it like the German *Romantiker* Novalis, in whose country, perhaps over whose pages, it was written.\*

Only one degree less isolated than Beddoes was George Darley, a young Irishman, desocialized in the midst of thousands by an unfortunate stammer and a poetic temperament, "a hermit in the center of London." Yet as a contributor to *The London Magazine*, and the friend of Lamb, he had become socially related to the

\* Another close parallel to Beddoes's mood is found in his great Italian contemporary Leopardi, who, while "Death's Jestbook" was under revision, wrote in 1834: "Now, I envy neither fools, nor the wise, the great, the small, the weak, the powerful. I envy the dead, and with them alone would I exchange my lot. Every pleasurable fancy, every thought of the future that comes to me in my solitude, and with which I pass away the time, is allied with the thought of death from which it is inseparable. And in this longing, neither the remembrance of my childish dreams, nor the thought of having lived in vain, disturbs me any more as formerly. When death comes to me, I shall die as peacefully and contentedly as if it were the only thing for which I had ever wished in the world. This is the sole prospect that reconciles me to Destiny." "Dialogue Between Tristano and a Friend" (Edwardes's translation).



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Elizabethan disciples long before he wrote his best work "Sylvia, or the May Queen" (1827). This is a rambling poetical drama, full of romantic impossibilities; yet well furnished with poetry too. It has a general spirit akin partly to Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and partly to "The Faithful Shepherdess" of Fletcher, whose editor Darley later became. In the same year Thomas Hood, also one of the *London Magazine* writers, published his "Plea of the Midsummer Fairies," a fanciful narrative poem, written, as he tells us in the dedicatory letter to Lamb, "to celebrate, by an allegory, that immortality which Shakespeare has conferred on the Fairy mythology by his 'Midsummer Night's Dream.' " We shall mention elsewhere Thomas Wade, who dramatized the story of patient Griselda from the Italian as Dekker and his collaborators had done before. His manuscript play of "Henry II," which was described by Mr. Buxton Forman as "Elizabethan but not imitative," and his "Jew of Arragon" come about 1830 and lie on the utmost limits of our field. The latter drama proved too pro-Hebraic for the patience of its audience, and may be considered as a reaction against Shylock and Marlowe's "Jew of Malta."

— While these Elizabethan imitations were being written, several of the Elizabethans themselves were appearing for the first time in scholarly editions, the work of the Rev. Alexander Dyce. Born in the year of the "Lyrical Ballads," he came to London about 1827, and within six years thereafter had edited the dramas of Peele, Greene, Webster, and Shirley, followed later by others of that great brotherhood. The debt of Elizabethan scholarship to Dyce and to the later labors of Cowden Clarke needs no comment.

It will be seen that there was a fairly continuous chain of social relationships between the different Elizabethan imitators and scholars. To some extent, though exactly how far we cannot tell, the torch was passed from hand to hand. The Elizabethan enthusiasm was no great popular wave as the medieval and Oriental had been, but the cult of a few comparatively obscure and uninfluential men, who encouraged each other and found little encouragement elsewhere. "What is the amount even of Shakespeare's fame?" demanded Hazlitt in 1817. "That, in that very country which boasts

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his genius and his birth, perhaps not one person in ten has ever heard of his name, or read a syllable of his writings!" With due allowance for Hazlitt's love of pugnacious hyperbole, one must feel the weight of such a statement. By 1822 Byron scents a change in the air, and alludes cynically to

Shakespeare, who just now is much in fashion;

but at that very time Hazlitt was recording again the neglect of the other Elizabethans: "Who reads Decker now? Or if by chance any one awakes the strings of that ancient lyre, and starts with delight as they yield wild, broken music, is he not accused of envy to the living Muse? What would a linen draper from Holborn think, if I were to ask him after the clerk of St. Andrews, the immortal, the forgotten Webster? His name and his works are no more heard of." Two years later, while Beddoes was in the midst of his grim masterpiece, and Procter's work was ending and Darley's beginning, Hazlitt renews the charge: "Even well-informed people among us hardly know the difference between Otway and Shakespeare; and if a person has a fancy for any of our elder classics, he may have it to himself for what the public cares."

Another significant fact is that the men connected with the Elizabethan current led a life analogous to that of the Elizabethans themselves. Lamb, Hazlitt, Cowden Clarke, Dyce, Hood, Darley, Wells, like Webster, Decker, Fletcher, and Massinger, were by birth or adoption Londoners. Like their great predecessors, they lived in a respectable but unconventional literary bohemia. They stood for the most poetical side of town life, as Wordsworth, Burns, and Scott did for that of the frontiers. The poetry of unnumbered human countenances, of constant incidents pathetic or laughable, was their daily landscape. They might have answered to Wordsworth (and Lamb did practically answer so):

To me the meanest face that mourns can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Procter's favorite method was to compose when alone in a crowd; and, as we learn from Miss Martineau, "he declared that he did

his best when walking London streets." Lamb has left it on record that he "often shed tears in the motley Strand from fulness of joy at so much life." Even Coleridge during most of his Shakespearean period was a resident near London. These writers could sympathize beyond other men with the great bygone drama because they had learned to sympathize first with the life that had produced it. If they were weak in that very humanism and character analysis in which Decker and Middleton excelled, that was partly the fault of their age. Their sympathy turned naturally toward the great bygone poets who had been like themselves city men and of their own manner of life, as Byron and Rogers turned to the bygone poets of the court and *salon*, as Wordsworth turned to his rural forerunners, Thomson and Dyer. One of the chief city influences which was open to them daily, and to Wordsworth so rarely, was the theater itself. There were giants on the stage in those days. Young Cowden Clarke tells us of his eager walks to see Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth and Queen Constance, Miss O'Neil as Juliet, John Kemble as Coriolanus or Brutus, Booth as Iago, and Edmund Kean as Othello, Lear, Hamlet, Richard III, Shylock, and Massinger's Sir Giles Overreach. "Forty or fifty years ago," wrote Leigh Hunt in 1850, "people of all times of life were much greater playgoers than they are now"; and thus the theater gave new life to that which had earlier made it live.

If the plays of the Elizabethan imitators are bracketed with those of Byron and Shelley, with "Otho the Great" by Keats and Brown, and Keats's fragment of "King Stephen," one realizes what an outburst of closet drama there was in the decade following 1816. Never before in the history of English literature had so much of literary merit taken that form in so short a time. For good or ill, that was one of the bequests which the later romantic generation left to posterity.

## II

If the Elizabethan tradition ran tangent to the "Cockney" group, the authors of *The London Magazine* formed an overlapping circle to it with a common chord. Hazlitt, Lamb, Reynolds, and Procter



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were connected with both of these closely related eddies, the first of which disintegrated almost simultaneously with the formation of the latter. The career of *The London Magazine* was painfully brief, from 1820 to 1829, and during the last half of that decade it was barren enough; but for the first few years of its being it was probably richer in good authors and enduring literature than any other English magazine has been before or since. It was also mainly the product of a literary group of London acquaintances, even if these writers did not form quite so definite an eddy as the "Cockneys."

The first editor, the man who dedicated its cornerstone to literature, was John Scott, a brilliant journalist of Scotch birth and London training. His career was unfortunately brief. He had been in various ways connected with the circle of Leigh Hunt, and when editor of a former paper, *The Champion*, had sometimes played the part of ally to *The Examiner*. Consequently it is easy to understand why he resented the Z articles in *Blackwood's* against the "Cockneys," how he was drawn into a quarrel with Lockhart, and finally into a duel with Lockhart's friend Christie. Scott was mortally wounded February 16, 1821, and died eleven days later. There is a touch of dramatic irony in the fact that, though he died in the attempt to avenge Hunt and Keats, the latter apparently did not like him. Scott is described by his contemporary Talfourd as "a critic of remarkable candour, eloquence, and discrimination, unfettered by the dogmas of contending schools of poetry and art; apt to discern the good and beautiful in all . . . more fit to preside over a little commonwealth of authors than to hold a despotic rule over subject contributors." The impetus which he gave the new magazine continued for some time after his death but was gradually lost under his less competent successors.

Before his death he had already gathered around him a knot of exceedingly able writers. One of these was Henry Cary, the translator of Dante, whose son and biographer has given us a vivid picture of the social life that underlay the literary product of the magazine: "My father's connection with the *London Magazine* made him acquainted with several of our ablest popular writers;

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such as Charles Lamb, Hazlitt, De Quincey, Procter, Allan Cunningham, Carlyle, Hood, Darley, and John Clare, the poet. With two of these, Lamb and Darley, he contracted a cordial intimacy and friendship, which was terminated only by death. Most of these he met at the table of Mr. Taylor, the publisher, and when once brought together, they not unfrequently met at the house of one or [*sic*] other of the number. At the first of these Magazine dinners, as they were called, held at Mr. Cary's own house, I remember that, among others, Lamb, Kelley, the farce-writer, and Clare were present. The conversation, which never flagged, consisted of a strange mixture of learning, wit, and puns, bad and good. . . . To a looker-on, as I was, the most interesting of the party was the peasant Clare. He was dressed in a labourer's holiday suit. The punsters evidently alarmed him; but he listened with the deepest attention to his host."\*

With the exception of Kelley, all of the writers mentioned above contributed to the *London*. De Quincey had transferred his home from the Lakes to the metropolis just as the magazine was getting under way, and published in its pages in 1821 his "Confessions of an English Opium Eater." Allan Cunningham was a minor Scotch author, who in his native country had seen Burns lying dead, sought out the friendship of the Ettrick Shepherd, and then come to London in early manhood to push his fortunes. His manliness was greater than his genius, and most of his poetry now is forgotten; but his acquaintances generally had a warm spot in their hearts for "honest Allan." Thomas Hood was from the beginning one of the leading spirits of the magazine, and after Scott's death assumed part of the editorial responsibility. Hood apparently became acquainted with Reynolds through their joint work on the *London*. They were for some time warm friends and in 1825 became brothers-in-law; but at about the time when the magazine first began to decline they quarreled and drifted apart, for reasons not clearly known. John Clare was a peasant poet of Northamptonshire, poor as Burns in financial resources and far poorer in physical

\*A full account of these dinners, too long for quotation, is given in Hood's "Literary Reminiscences," No. IV.



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strength, that invaluable asset for the penniless. Taylor, of the firm of Taylor and Hessey, the publishers of *The London Magazine*, became his friend and patron, and published several volumes of his poems. Clare lived in the country, but made a number of short trips to London, where he met most of the magazine group and became the friend of Cunningham.

Another contributor of verse to the *London*, like Clare in his poetic mood, his loveliness, and his irresponsibility, though different enough in birth and training, was Hartley Coleridge. After his unfortunate experiences as an undergraduate at Oxford, his brother tells us that he "remained in London and the neighborhood about two years . . . writing, from time to time, small pieces for the *London Magazine*." It does not appear, however, that he saw much of the other contributors, unless it was Lamb, his father's friend. A writer who left no enduring work but who was a prominent figure among the set, was Thomas Griffiths Wainwright, described by Talfourd as a young man, "with a sort of undress military air, and the conversation of a smart, lively, clever, heartless, voluptuous coxcomb." He is interesting to us now only because Lamb overrated him. Another contributor, who was the friendly correspondent of Lamb, but otherwise not connected socially with the writers for the *London*, was Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet. His friendship for Lamb was due to the magazine. In its pages he had read the "Essays of Elia"; and, thinking the treatment of the Quakers therein hardly fair, he had written to the author in gentle remonstrance. Among other contributors were Thomas Noon Talfourd and Horace Smith. Some of these men wrote in the *London* under their own names, others anonymously, others under pseudonyms. J. H. Reynolds signed himself "Edward Herbert"; Wainwright was "Janus Weathercock"; Charles Dilke used the pen name of "Thurma"; and Lamb made the *nom de plume* of "Elia" immortal.

That *The London Magazine* was not merely a vehicle for publication but also an inspirational force, a creator of new authors, is shown in the case of De Quincey. He had reached the age of thirty-six without publishing, and apparently without writing anything



of merit. Had the editorial staff not suggested to him his "Confessions," he might never have written them, and might never have embarked on his long career as a periodical writer. His biographer Japp tells us that at the periodical after-dinner meetings which Taylor and Hessey held with their contributors "as was natural, De Quincey's experiences due to opium were often spoken of. This at length led to his being asked to write an account of these. The result was the famous 'Confessions,' which produced an immediate effect, and placed De Quincey in the front rank of literary men then living." Apparently these "Confessions" owed nothing to the literary environment of the Lake district, although many of the scenes which they describe had happened there; the entire work was written in the author's city lodgings. "Meantime I am again in London," it tells us, "and again I pace the terraces of Oxford Street by night." It was the *London* also which first launched Tom Hood on the sea of literature. He was working for a living as an engraver and furtively dreaming of poetry on which he did not dare to spend his time when, after the death of John Scott, he was offered the position of sub-editor by the new proprietors of the magazine, who were his friends. Hood himself described this event as one "which was to introduce me to Authorship in earnest, and make the Muse, with whom I had only flirted, my companion for life. . . . To judge by my zeal and delight in my new pursuit, the bowl had at last found its natural bias."

If the magazine did not quite so definitely create Lamb as an author, it at least helped him mature his powers as he had never done before. For a quarter of a century he had been experimenting with poetry, drama, and essay-writing without making a decided success in any of these fields. It is by his "Essays of Elia," his part in the *London*, that he holds his enduring niche in our literature. Hazlitt introduced him to John Scott, who invited him to contribute occasional essays, and thereby made him immortal.

As for John Clare, his debt to the London group as a group was less; but it is a question whether he would ever have emerged into poethood without the help of the publisher Taylor. In 1819, when Clare as yet had published nothing, a common friend sent a bundle

of his MSS. poems to the London bookmaker. Taylor at the time was rolling over plans for the yet unborn *London Magazine*, and felt that the discovery of an English Burns or another Bloomfield among the poor would have a sensational character favorable for the promotion of new enterprises. His motives were far from being wholly praiseworthy; but they led to the launching of Clare as a poet. Taylor published his first volume of verse in 1820, and drummed up sales and reviews for the new "prodigy" by every means in his power. The first number of *The London Magazine* contained a long puff for the new *protégé*, "Some account of John Clare, an agricultural laborer and poet." Influence was used on *The Quarterly*, which published a highly favorable review; and four editions of the poems were called for in swift succession. Later on Taylor treated Clare rather badly; and subsequent volumes of verse fell off in popularity as they improved in quality; but the influence of Taylor and the *London* on Clare's career is beyond question. The brief hour of popularity gave the half-starved, uneducated, pottering farm hand faith in himself; and in a crisis of want and despair the smoking flax of poetry was not quenched.

It seems strange to bracket with this unlettered peasant a wealthy, proud and excessively independent scholar; but Walter Savage Landor also found a publisher in Taylor after several members of the trade had rejected his MSS. His first "Imaginary Conversations" were printed in 1824; and his dialogue between Southey and Porson was published some months earlier—as a "feeler" for the public—in *The London Magazine*. No such obvious debt can be claimed, perhaps, for Darley, Cunningham, Barton, and Hartley Coleridge, yet the latter made his first venture in that periodical, and the connection of the others marked the beginning of their best creative period.

The magazine poetry of Barton, Clare, and Hartley Coleridge, like all their verse, is marked by a sincere and childlike simplicity. Barton in spite of creaking lines, tame moralizings, and weak poetical inversions, gives consistently the impression of a genuine, lovable, and poetical spirit. "His muse may be said to possess a lovely Quaker countenance," said his friendly reviewer in the

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*London*, “. . . a Venus in a poke-bonnet.” In the poems of Clare, obvious but beautiful thoughts and emotions gleam through the limpid, childlike language like pebbles through his own rural brooks.

The woodbines, fresh with morning hours,  
Are what I love to see;  
The ivy spreading darksome bowers,  
Is where I love to be;  
Left there, as when a boy, to lie  
And talk to flower and tree,  
And fancy, in my ecstasy,  
Their silence answers me.

In Hartley Coleridge's sonnets to R. S. Jameson it is easy to trace the influence of his early associate and father's friend, Wordsworth:

When we were idlers with the loitering rills,  
The need of human love we little noted;  
Our love was Nature; and the peace that floated  
On the white mist, and slept upon the hills,  
To sweet accord subdued our wayward wills. . . .  
But now I find how dear thou wert to me;  
That, man is more than half of Nature's treasure.

There is a more conscious and ornate style in the verse contributions of Hood and Cunningham, each of whom printed at least one masterly poem in the magazine, Hood's "Lycus the Centaur" and Cunningham's "A wet sheet and a flowing sea." Hood's "Fair Ines" has a lingering touch of medieval pageantry:

I saw thee, lovely Ines,  
Descend along the shore,  
With bands of noble gentlemen,  
And banners waved before.

The versatility of this metrical Proteus had already shown itself in "Faithless Sally Brown," that wild orgy of puns, which appeared in the *London* for March, 1822.

*The London Magazine* began at a time when cosmopolitan forces were strongly at work in literature and thought, when the reaction



after the Napoleonic wars had had time to become effective. The editors of the *London* foresaw the advantages of this tendency and were eager to promote it. In the Prospectus prefixed to their first number they said: "To Foreign Criticism, therefore, and Foreign Literature generally, as well as to the theories and progress of the Fine Arts in the various National Schools of Europe, we shall pay an attention which has not been hitherto given to them in any similar publication." This promise was kept. The critical and scholarly articles in the magazine handle the literature of the ancient Greek and Goth, of remote or modern periods, or both, in Scandinavia, Germany, Spain, Italy, Russia, and little-known Serbia. These articles in their sum total have a panoramic effect not without its appeal to the imagination even in our own more learned age. Cary's chief work at this time was his discussion and translation of the old French poets. When we add the sympathy and fairness of the *London's* reviews on contemporary poetry, we realize that much of the magazine which has no enduring character as literature represented nevertheless a sturdy effort in the literary and intellectual cause.

The fiction of the magazine includes a number of highly romantic tales, if by "romantic" we mean a mixture of sentimentalism with either supernatural incidents or remote ages. Perhaps the best of these is George Darley's "Lilian of the Vale." In this a feverish and poetical young man falls in love with a beautiful young female in a retired valley; but she vanishes, leaving him unable to decide whether she was woman, spirit, or delirious dream. There is also prose of a much more substantial type, as, for example, De Quincey's articles on economics and education.

The two enduring glories of the magazine, however, are the "Confessions" and the "Essays of Elia." They were both the masterpieces of lifelong magazine writers, one of whom was just entering on his career, the other reaching its culmination. The "Confessions" are probably the result of a single and genuine aim; without any great moral nobility they are intellectually sincere. But, judged less by the way they came from the writer's brain than by the way in which they impinged on the reader's, they sounded with unconscious

versatility the various chords of contemporary tendencies. The author felt nervously their likeness as Rousseauistic confessions to "French literature or to that part of the German which is tainted with the spurious and defective sensibility of the French." While the opium-eater's revelation was still freshly before the public, an article in *Blackwood's* began: "This in confessedly the age of confession." De Quincey makes his appeal to the period's childlike and none too scientific enthusiasm about science. "I, who . . . have conducted my experiments upon this interesting subject with a sort of galvanic battery,—and have, for the general benefit of the world, inoculated myself, as it were, with the poison of eight hundred drops of laudanum per day." For the romantic lover of remote ages there are gorgeous, association-haunted passages: "At night, when I lay awake in bed, vast processions passed along in mournful pomp; friezes of never ending stories, that to my feelings were as sad and solemn as if they were stories drawn from times before Oedipus or Priam, before Tyre, before Memphis." We are told that some of the pictures of Piranesi "represented vast Gothic halls." The Orientalizing disciple of "Vathek" and "Abydos" enjoys reading that "the mere antiquity of Asiatic things, of their institutions, histories, modes of faith, etc., is so impressive, that to me the vast age of the race and name overpowers the sense of youth in the individual." Those who have read that wild "Day of Judgment" which forms the close for every one of Blake's longer symbolical poems will feel as if De Quincey in the intoxication of opium had seen the same vision and was describing it. "The morning was come of a mighty day—a day of crisis and of final hope for human nature, then suffering some mysterious eclipse, and laboring in some dread extremity. Somewhere, I knew not where—somehow, I knew not how—a battle, a strife, an agony was conducting,—was evolving like a great drama, or piece of music." It is easy to see why the "Confessions" took well with the public. On the one hand they sounded all the stops of powerful but failing romantic tastes; on the other, as scientific autobiography, they did not jar against incipient realism.

Similarly, though in a very different manner, Lamb's "Essays of

Elia" blend the stock notes of the romantic generation with others not then current, with echoes from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and anticipations of later novelists. He views the old South-sea House with Ossianic eyes, finds in it "a desolation something like Balclutha's," and thrills as Byron or Chateaubriand might at the fascination of far-off countries, "dusty maps of Mexico, dim as dreams." That wildly Gothic and mediæval poem of his friend Hood, "The Haunted House," might claim a subdued and modest cousin in his "Blakesmoor in H—shire." "I do not know a pleasure more affecting than to range at will over the deserted apartments of some fine old family mansion," he tells us, and names with awe the "tattered and diminished 'scutcheon that hung upon the time-worn walls of thy princely stairs, BLAKESMOOR. . . . Its fading rags and colors cobweb-stained told that its subject was of two centuries back." His "Complaint of the Decay of Beggars" runs parallel in thought to "The Old Cumberland Beggar" of his former friend Wordsworth. We suspect that his essay on chimney-sweepers owed something to the poetry on chimney-sweeps by Blake, poetry which he had read some years before. Lamb describes them as "tender novices . . . with their little professional notes sounding like the *peep peep* of a young sparrow . . . poor blots—innocent blacknesses"; thereby touching the same sympathetic chord as

A little black thing among the snow,  
Crying "weep! weep!" in notes of woe!

Like Blake and Wordsworth both he considers the child as the unruined exponent of the poetical mood. "Ye inexplicable half understood appearances, why comes in reason to tear away the preternatural mist, bright or gloomy, that enshrouded you? Why make ye so sorry a figure in my relation, who made up to me—to my childish eyes—the mythology of the Temple? In those days I saw Gods as 'old men covered with a mantle,' walking upon the earth. Let the dreams of classic idolatry perish,—extinct be the fairies and fairy trumpery of legendary fabling, in the heart of childhood, there will, forever, spring up a well of innocent or wholesome superstition. . . . In that little Goshen there will be light, when the



grown world flounders about in the darkness of sense and materiality. While childhood, and while dreams, reducing childhood, shall be left, imagination shall not have spread her holy wings totally to fly the earth." His essays, coming in the "age of confession," are full of personal history, none the less autobiographical because often disguised and modestly suppressed. Lamb had little affinity with either the national antiquarianism of Scott or the fantastic medievalism of Keats and Coleridge; he lived in the present and wrote of it; yet over it he repeatedly diffuses an atmosphere of antique glamour. He tells us himself that his essays are "pranked in an affected array of antique modes and phrases"; and describes one of them as "some half forgotten humors of some old clerks defunct, in an old house of business, long since gone to decay." "What an antique air had the now almost effaced sundials, with their moral inscriptions, seeming coevals with that Time which they measured." That romantic love of past years and old associations which at times had proved wildly intoxicating and at others unspeakably insipid, here becomes mellowed like rare old wine. "Antiquity! thou wondrous charm," he cries, "what art thou that, being nothing, art everything! . . . What mystery lurks in this retroversion? or what half Januses are we, that cannot look forward with the same idolatry with which we forever revert! The mighty future is as nothing, being everything! the past is everything, being nothing!" This was said at Oxford, that seminary of medieval poetry from the days of Tom Warton down. To such an extent Lamb was the child of his age. If in many other ways he was not, that fact simply illustrates the old truth that great literature is colored but not created by passing changes of taste.

The two *anni mirabiles* of *The London Magazine* were 1821 and 1822. After that it began to fall off, and from the end of 1824 on dragged along a posthumous existence of no concern to literature. The letters of Lamb to Bernard Barton during this period sound like a dirge. May, 1823: "I cannot but think the *London* drags heavily. I miss Janus. And O how it misses Hazlitt! Procter too is affronted (as Janus has been) with their abominable curtailment of his things." September, 1823: "The *London*, I fear, falls off.—I

linger among its creaking rafters, like the last rat." February, 1825: "Our 2<sup>d</sup> No. is all trash. What are T. and H. about? . . . Why did poor Scott die? There was comfort in writing with such associates as were his little band of Scribblers, some gone away, some affronted away, and I am left as the solitary widow looking for water cresses." Lamb was loath to give up the *London*, of which he truly said: "I used up all my best thoughts in that publication"; but at last it became too soulless even for him. In August, 1825, his last contribution to the magazine was printed; and in that same month he wrote to Barton: "Taylor has dropt the *London*. It was indeed a dead weight. . . . I shuffle off my part of the pack, and stand like Xtian with light and merry shoulders." From that hour, though the magazine ran four years longer, no mention of it occurs in Lamb's correspondence.

A word may be said here about non-periodical work by authors of this group. That of some has already been discussed; that of others, such as Talfourd and Hartley Coleridge, belongs mainly to a period after 1830. Allan Cunningham in 1822 published his drama "Sir Marmaduke Maxwell," and had written his narrative poem, "The Maid of Elvar," by 1819, though it was not published until 1833. Scott praised in "Sir Marmaduke" the supernatural element, which to any one but an early nineteenth-century Scotchman appears rather crude; and Wordsworth expressed approval for the trailing Spenserian stanzas of "The Maid of Elvar." Few moderns, we suspect, could find anything of interest in either save through their connection with the medieval and Gothic currents of taste. "Honest Allan's" fugitive lyrics in the *London* have far greater permanent value than his more ambitious attempts.

John Clare published the bulk of his poetry between 1820 and 1827. What he owed to the *London* group was encouragement, rather than a particular type of inspiration. This last came to him mainly from his rural surroundings, which were so unlike those of Hazlitt, Procter, and Lamb.

I found the poems in the fields,  
And only wrote them down.

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As far as he was consciously the disciple of a literary tradition, it was that of the nature poets, Burns, Cowper, Wordsworth, and Crabbe, all of whose poems formed part of his scanty library as early as 1821. Like his city acquaintances, however, he "had a fondness for the poetry of the time of Elizabeth," which showed itself especially in metrical details, and in which they must have encouraged him. Few men have been more poetical in their moods than Clare, though his work is a mournful proof that moods alone, without strength of character and commanding intellect, cannot become supremely great.

If Clare's poems were those of the fields, Hood's were those of the town. The verse which he poured out so plentifully during the third decade of the century was mainly humorous, whims, parodies, and burlesques. All the literary stock-in-trade of the age is passed over with good-natured ridicule: the Oriental tale, the medieval legend, the ballad, the fairy tale, the ghost story. In "Faithless Sally Brown" and "Faithless Nelly Gray" the torch of the arch-punster passes into his hands from those of Lamb, whose fondness for verbal quibbles had been fed for years by the example of his beloved Elizabethans. Little of this humorous verse, readable as it is, has much enduring value; but it sold well, which explains why it was written; and Hood during these years was, Cunningham tells us, "better known to the world as a dexterous punster than as a true poet." This yielding of the poet to the popular demand was eyed askance by some of his friends; and Hartley Coleridge wrote to him in protest: "In whatever you attempt you excel. Then why not exert your best and noblest talent, as well as that wit, which I would never wish to be dominant." A short time previous Hood had published his dramatic and somber poem, "The Dream of Eugene Aram"; but aside from this and a few of his earlier contributions to the *London* he almost consistently before 1830 wore the cap and bells. His most "romantic" poem, "The Haunted House," with its unearthly atmosphere and its motto from Wordsworth's "Hart-leap Well," was first printed in *Hood's Magazine* in 1844, his "Bridge of Sighs" and "Song of the Shirt" appearing at about the same time.

Of the four professional magazine writers of the period who have



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made lasting reputations through their work in that field, Lamb, — Hazlitt, De Quincey, and Hood, all were connected with *The London Magazine*. Two of these men, Hood and De Quincey, after their *London* novitiate, edited or contributed to various other periodicals. The *London* encouraged the genius of its children, and had a stimulating effect on later periodical literature; but its brief and inconsistent career is melancholy proof that the best literary art is not compatible with the financial success of a magazine.

## CHAPTER X

### *The Expatriated Poets and the Italian Movement in Poetry*

THE history of English poetry is largely one of cross fertilization; and no foreign literature has enriched what was best in it more than the Italian. Chaucer owed much to it. Wyatt and Surrey brought the sonnet from it into English verse. The debt of Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists, both in general spirit and in plots of plays, would fill an enormous volume. Milton when young traveled in Italy, and is said to have taken the first idea of his great epic from a crude Italian play.

After the Restoration of Charles II the Italian influence in poetry declined, and from the time of Pope became very small indeed. Until 1750 or 1760 the chief foreign coloring was from France. After that the intellect of Great Britain itself became the seminal mind of Europe, and for half a century scattered the seeds of "Ossian," "The Night Thoughts," Thomson and Gray broadcast on the continent. The importation from Germany was in many ways ill guided and ill fated; all the Scotch authors were essentially indigenous products; and such foreign influences as worked on Wordsworth, Southey or Coleridge were French or Teutonic. From 1700 to 1816 one finds woefully few traces of that literary Gulf Stream from the Mediterranean which had warmed the age of Elizabeth into poetry.

That this should have been true through the insulated eighteenth century is not surprising, but one might have expected the new tide earlier in the nineteenth. Travel conditions probably had something to do with the delay. In Shakespeare's day hundreds of young men were making the grand tour of Italy at the very time when the

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Italian coloring was so marked in their poetry. Between 1786 and 1803, while the German wave was gathering and subsiding, William Taylor of Norwich, Ann Radcliffe, Matt Lewis, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Campbell, Crabb Robinson, and we know not how many other English men of letters, visited Germany. During the opening years of the nineteenth century the disrupted state of Italy and the power of Napoleon there tended to discourage British travelers. Byron did not visit it in the journey that produced the first two cantos of "Childe Harold"; and Coleridge, when in Rome, practically fled for his life from the suspicion of Bonaparte. The Italian strain in English poetry became marked very soon after Waterloo.

In the autumn of 1816 Byron, after a brief stay in Switzerland, moved into Italy, and lived there continuously for about seven years. In March, 1818, Shelley left England forever, and during the remainder of his life was an Italian resident. A large part of Byron's best work and nearly all of Shelley's was written on the ground where Dante, Tasso, and Petrarch had written centuries before. For many years, also, Walter Savage Landor, though he had little to do either with Shelley and Byron or with popular currents of literature, was a dweller in the same country.

The first man who made the Italian current conspicuous in the public eye, however, was neither a great poet nor a resident in Italy, though he probably knew a good deal of Italian literature. This was John Hookham Frere. Member of a family of diplomats, he was engaged in important diplomatic service from 1800 to 1804 at Lisbon and Madrid, and again at the latter station 1808-09. After that, feeling that he had been unjustly criticized, he withdrew to private life, but was for many years in active correspondence with his brother, who was secretary of the British Legation at Constantinople. He was thus, like Byron, and even before Byron, in touch with the thought of the Mediterranean peoples. As a result of his years in Spain he played a subordinate part in the Spanish literary current. Three of his translations from the "Poem of the Cid" were printed as an appendix to Southey's "Chronicle of the Cid"; and many years later he corresponded with Southey, aiding him in his "Peninsular War."



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During his London life Frere was one of the Holland House wits, and might have been included in that group of poets. Lord and Lady Holland were old friends; they had spent some months at Lisbon when he was there; and on a window in Holland House Frere wrote:

May neither Fire destroy, nor Waste impair,  
Nor Time consume thee, till the twentieth heir;  
May Taste respect thee, and may Fashion spare.

Most of his work, all of his best, is mildly satirical. In 1797 he was one of the authors, in *The Anti-Jacobin*, of "The Rovers," "The Loves of the Triangles," and those other pungent take-offs on Darwin and melodrama. His "Prospectus and Specimen of an intended National Work, by William and Robert Whistlecraft" is a burlesque of tales on medieval chivalry:

Beginning (as my Bookseller desires)  
Like an old Minstrel with his gown and beard.

This poem, however, though in harmony with the spirit of Pope, is in a manner very different and new in English poetry. It is modeled on the Italian mock-heroic writers, and uses their *ottava rima*, which had once been fairly common in English verse but had fallen into disuse for over a century. Though enjoyable reading, it was neither great nor directly very influential on the public mind; but it set fire to Byron and produced from him his "Beppo," and, as a result of "Beppo," "Don Juan." In October, 1817, Byron wrote to Murray announcing "Beppo," and said: "I have written a poem of eighty-four octave stanzas, humorous, in or after the excellent manner of Whistlecraft (whom I take to be Frere)." Again, March, 1818: "The style is not English, it is Italian; Berni is the original of all; Whistlecraft was my immediate model." How closely Frere was his "immediate model" one does not realize until he has read the earlier poem:

I've finished now three hundred lines and more,  
And therefore I begin Canto the Second,  
Just like those wandering ancient Bards of Yore;  
They never laid a plan, nor ever reckon'd

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What turning they should take the day before;  
They follow'd where the lovely Muses beckon'd:  
The Muses led them up to Mount Parnassus,  
And that's the reason that they all surpass us;

or

When those vile cannibals were overpower'd,  
Only two fat Duennas were devour'd.

It is doubtful how thoroughly Frere knew his continental models; but Byron, by adoption already an Italian, understood them well and pursued the trail with vigor. His "Beppo," unlike Frere's poem, is Italian in characters and location as well as in manner. He followed this up with his "Vision of Judgment" and "Don Juan," poems which might antagonize an audience but could not fail to impress them. His Italian environment may have fostered their indecency as well as their greatness, for he remarks in the first canto of "Don Juan" that

What men call gallantry, and gods adultery,  
Is much more common where the climate's sultry.

In the fourth canto he defines his relationship to his Italian models:

To the kind reader of our sober clime  
This way of writing will appear exotic;  
Pulci was sire of the half-serious rhyme,  
Who sang when chivalry was more Quixotic,  
And revell'd in the fancies of the time,  
True knights, chaste dames, huge giants, kings despotic;  
But all these, save the last, being obsolete,  
I chose a modern subject as more meet.

Byron likewise translated part of Pulci's "Morgante Maggiore" in *ottava rima*, and in the advertisement to it commented on Frere's debt to the old Italian satirists. Southey also felt that here was a new phenomenon in poetry, and wrote to Landor in 1820: "A fashion of poetry has been imported which has had a great run, and is in a fair way of being worn out. It is of Italian growth,—an adaptation of the manner of Pulci, Berni, and Ariosto in his sportive

mood. Frere began it. What he produced was too good in itself and too inoffensive to become popular. . . . Lord Byron immediately followed; first with his 'Beppo,' which implied the profligacy of the writer, and lastly, with his 'Don Juan,' which is a foul blot on the literature of his country, an act of high treason on English poetry. The manner has had a host of imitators."

The "host of imitators" are, as usual, no company for a man loving good poetry; but as one of the most popular and least unworthy we may mention "Barry Cornwall," whose "Gyges" and "Diego de Montilla" both play the sedulous ape to Frere and Byron. The latter poem begins:

The octave rhyme (Ital. *ottava rima*)  
 Is a delightful measure made of ease  
 Turn'd up with epigram, and, tho' it seem a  
 Verse that a man may scribble when he please,  
 Is somewhat difficult; indeed, I deem a  
 Stanza like Spenser's will be found to tease  
 Less, or heroic couplet: there, the pen  
 May touch and polish and touch up again.

Among minor mock-heroic productions of the type may be mentioned Tom Hood's "Two Peacocks of Bedford," "Bianca's Dream, A Venetian Story," and several other short poems.

In addition to the direct satirical current mentioned by Byron and Southey, there was a great and sudden increase after 1817 in the use of the long neglected *ottava rima* for serious poetry. Shelley adopted it for his "Witch of Atlas" (1820), in which the introductory stanzas are in the half-mocking style of Berni, but those of the narrative itself in the seriousness of unearthly beauty. He employed it also in the short poem "The Zucca." Keats used the Italian cadence for his Italian story of "Isabella" (1820). Charles Lloyd, who had never tried that metre before, poured out hundreds of stanzas in it between 1820 and 1822, "Desultory Thoughts in London," "Titus and Gisippus," and "Beritola," the last an Italian tale, and both of the last partly borrowed from Boccaccio. He tells us that he never dreamed of copying the style of Pulci; but the monthly reviewers, he admits, declare "that he has attempted to



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imitate, and failed in the attempt, the mixture of pathos and humor of the Italian writers."

The mock-heroic tone and eight-line stanza, however, were only part of a much larger borrowing from Italian tradition and literature in the form of narrative material. The "romantic" longing for some new national antiquity to write about, having traversed Scotland, England, Wales, Germany, and Spain, came at last to the land of Horace and Vergil. By 1820 "Barry Cornwall," one of those light popular weathercocks who show best which way the wind is blowing, could write:

For ever and for ever shalt thou be  
Unto the lover and the poet dear,  
Thou land of sunlit skies and fountains clear,  
Of temples, and gray columns, and waving woods,  
And mountains, from whose rifts the bursting floods  
Rush in bright tumult to the Adrian sea:  
O thou romantic land of Italy!

His "Marcian Colonna" is an Italian verse narrative, to which is prefixed a quotation from Byron's "Lament of Tasso." Several of "Cornwall's" brief and not badly written dramatic scenes are from Italian history or legend: "Ludovico Sforza," "The Way to Conquer," "The Broken Heart," "The Falcon," "Michael Angelo," "Raffaelle and Fornarina," "The Florentine Party." His "Sicilian Story" is from the tale of "The Decameron" that Keats retold so much better in "Isabella." J. H. Reynolds derived his "Garden of Florence" from Boccaccio; and Charles Wells's "Stories from Nature" contained half a dozen prose Italian tales. With the exception of Byron and Frere, all writers mentioned so far were connected with the eddy around Leigh Hunt and stood for the Italian phase of that tradition-breeding movement. Hunt in 1818, in his "Epistle to Lord Byron," pointed out the significance of this tendency:

All the four great Masters of our Song  
Stars that shine out amidst a starry throng,  
Have turned to Italy for added light,  
As earth is kissed by the sweet moon at night;—  
Milton for half his style, Chaucer for tales,

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Spenser for flowers to fill his isles and vales,  
And Shakespeare's self for frames already done  
To build his everlasting piles upon.  
Her genius is more soft, harmonious, fine;  
Ours bolder, deeper, and more masculine:  
In short, as woman's sweetness to man's force,  
Less grand, but softening by the intercourse,  
So the two countries are,—so may they be,—  
England the high-souled man, the charmer Italy.

The Italian current, however, was by no means confined to the "Cockneys." Samuel Rogers, during the brief restoration of the Bourbon French king before the "hundred days," had made through Italy one of those journeys that the Napoleonic wars had previously rendered so difficult. This had ripened in his mind while the poems of his old friend Byron and his new friend "Cornwall" were appearing; and in 1822 and 1828 respectively he published the two parts of his "Italy." Unlike all the poet's previous work, both in metre and mood, it consists of a series of very brief narratives or descriptive sketches, a few in prose, most of them in pleasing though not very powerful blank verse.

There is a glorious City in the Sea.  
The Sea is in the broad, the narrow streets,  
Ebbing and flowing; and the salt sea-weed  
Clings to the marble of her palaces;

or we have a vision of Galileo in young manhood,

Chanting aloud in gaiety of heart  
Some verse of Ariosto.

At every page in "Italy" we trace the influence of that great, ill-balanced friend whose apology it contains:

Yes, Byron, thou art gone,  
Gone like a star that through the firmament  
Shot and was lost, in its eccentric course  
Dazzling, perplexing. Yet thy heart, methinks,  
Was generous, noble—noble in its scorn  
Of all things low or little.

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Much later, in 1837, Wordsworth, the literary opposite but personal friend of Rogers, made a similar journey and wrote on the strength of it his "Memorials of a Tour in Italy." In this field the lesser poet reaped the better harvest.

More fruitful than either was Hazlitt's brief trip in 1824 which resulted in his "Journey through France and Italy." One feels that the chapters dealing with the latter country are more colored by sentiment, by awe at the great past, by what is usually called romanticism, than those on the French landscape and people. The trail of "Childe Harold" is obvious. Like Byron the author cries in Rome: "Come here, oh man! and worship thine own spirit, that can hoard up, as in a shrine, the treasures of two thousand years, and can create out of the memory of fallen splendors and departed grandeur a solitude deeper than that of desert wildernesses. . . . Not far from this are the baths of Titus; the grass and the poppy (the flowers of oblivion) grow over them. . . . A few paces off is the Coliseum, or Amphitheatre of Titus, the noblest ruin in Rome. . . . As you pass under it, it seems to raise itself above you, and mingle with the sky in its majestic simplicity, as if earth were a thing too gross for it." The ocean becomes for him Byron's "image of eternity," the

glorious mirror where the Almighty's form  
Glasses itself in tempest.

"There is something in being near the sea, like the confines of eternity. It is a new element, a pure abstraction. The mind loves to hover on that which is endless, and forever the same. . . . Great as thou art, unconscious of thy greatness, unwieldy, enormous, preposterous, twin-birth of matter, rest in thy dark, unfathomed cave of mystery, mocking human pride and weakness." The description of Radicofani is an outburst of romantic medievalism never equaled in Hazlitt's writing on English ground, perhaps because, unlike Scott, he had lived among the inland towns of England and not on the scenes of her old border wars. "It reminded me, by its preternatural strength and sullen aspect, of the castle of Giant Despair in 'The Pilgrim's Progress.' The dark and stern spirit of



former times might be conceived to have entrenched itself here as in its last hold; to have looked out and laughed at precipices and storms, and the puny assaults of hostile bands, and resting on its red right arm, to have wasted away through inaction and disuse in its unapproachable solitude and barbarous desolation. Never did I see anything so rugged and so stately, apparently so formidable in a former period, so forlorn in this. It was a majestic shadow of the mighty past, suspended in another region, belonging to another age."

The most important journey of all, though less connected with our subject than the others, was that of the great painter Turner. About 1819 he followed Shelley and preceded Keats in his first pilgrimage to the land of Raphael and Correggio; and this sojourn in the south eventually had a marked effect on his artistic manner, especially increasing the lightness and brilliance of his color. In 1823 he gave the world his "Bay of Baiae," "the first of those glorious dramas of Italy which are especially associated with his name." Most of Turner's great Italian paintings were done after the end of the Romantic generation; but in 1830 he furnished his admirable illustrations to Rogers's "Italy."

The minor poets after Waterloo have many other poems of Italian origin or inspiration at intervals through their volumes. Mrs. Hemans leads us to "Naples and her lovely bay" in "The Death of Conradin." Milman's greatly overrated play "Fazio" (1815) was one of the first forerunners of the general invasion. It is a story of erring justice, and so is the history of its reception; for it made Milman Professor of Poetry at Oxford, while Keats was caviare and Shelley anathema. Still earlier came Lord Thurlow's "Hermilda" (1812), a weak imitation of Tasso in *ottava rima*, and his feebly sentimental "Doge's Daughter" (1814). R. E. Landor, inspired perhaps by the Italian residence of his greater brother, in 1824 roused a passing ripple of interest by his "Count Arezzi." In 1825 Thomas Wade, as yet a mere boy and an almost too subservient admirer of Shelley, published five poems under the title of "Tasso and the Sisters." In them we find Italian subject-matter, *ottava rima*, and very obvious imitation of "The Witch of Atlas," combined

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with much immaturity and not a little genuine poetry. Of his play, "Woman's Love" (acted in 1828), he says in the Preface: "The sources from whence the story of this drama is derived, are well known to the readers of Boccaccio, Petrarch and Chaucer. Goldoni's elegant genius adorned with it the stage of Italy; but the author of the present work had no opportunity of perusing the 'Griselda' until after the completion of 'Woman's Love.'" This imitative but really meritorious play went promptly through two editions. Like "The Cenci" of Wade's idol Shelley it was at once Italian and yet strongly colored by the Elizabethan dramatists. Mary R. Mitford between 1820 and 1830 wrote three rather popular verse dramas on Italian themes, "Fiesco," "The Foscari," and "Rienzi." William Sotheby, who many years before had helped to imitate the Scotch poetry out of existence, in 1828 fathered a wearisome effusion imitating Rogers's poem and identical in title. "Romantic Italy" had become part of the literary stock in trade, like the other "romantic" countries, and eventually led to the novels of Bulwer-Lytton, "Rienzi," "Zanoni," "The Last Days of Pompeii."

Among the forces making for this tendency, it must be remembered that the wars of Napoleon had brought one phase of Italy three quarters of the way to London. The Corsican conqueror had filled Parisian art galleries with the rarest treasures of transalpine genius; and when the fall of Bonaparte opened these galleries to foreigners, Englishmen by a brief journey could see landscapes and portraits previously too remote for any save a few. The poet Croly in 1815 visited Paris, and there saw on the glowing canvas,

Superb Venetian, pearl and purple stoled;  
Romantic Lombard, fiery Florentine,  
Brightening, as up the Alp the evening's gold  
From the deep vineyard to the crown of pine.

Croly was only one visitor among thousands of British and dozens of authors.

A special current from Italy was that of her greatest poet Dante. During the eighteenth century he had been like St. Paul to a medieval Catholic, an author to be much revered and never read.



Near the turn of the century Hayley had translated a fragment of "The Divine Comedy," and Boyd the entire poem, in a manner not likely to increase its audience. Cary in 1805 published his admirable translation of "The Inferno," and in 1814 that of the whole work; but this was very indifferently received at first. The discerning public made the translator bring out the complete poem at his own expense, a method of encouraging poetry not wholly forgotten in our own enlightened age. Apparently Dante had neither audience nor imitators until the downfall of Napoleon turned English life and thought once more toward the Mediterranean. A few discerning men loved him. Coleridge, for example, in 1804 wrote about money, "to buy me comforts for my voyage, etc., Dante and a dictionary." But when they tried to interest the public in him their praise fell upon deaf ears. In 1809 Southey wrote of his "Kehama": "Every generation will afford me some half dozen admirers of it, and the everlasting column of Dante's fame does not stand upon a wider base." This was four years after Cary's "Inferno." But in 1818 a lecture on Cary's translation by Coleridge, and an article in *The Edinburgh Review* by Ugo Foscolo and Mackintosh suddenly created a public. Coleridge's lecture, according to his son, led to the immediate sale of a thousand copies. Five years earlier neither lecture nor article would probably have wakened any response; but now the reading world was becoming interested in all things Italian. In that same year (1818) appeared Peacock's "Nightmare Abbey," in which the fashionable Mr. Listless says: "I don't know how it is, but Dante never came in my way till lately. I never had him in my collection, and if I had had him I should not have read him. But I find he is growing fashionable, and I am afraid I must read him some wet morning." The next year Cary's version went into a second edition. In 1824 Wordsworth, who was no great admirer of the gloomy Florentine, wrote rather peevishly: "It has become lately—owing a good deal, I believe, to the example of Schlegel—the fashion to extol him above measure." After this the vogue of "The Divine Comedy" was assured; but it started as part of the general Italian wave, and before that wave arose the best critics in Europe could not force Dante down the Anglo-Saxon throat.



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This vogue had two roots. One was in England, represented by Cary, Leigh Hunt, author of "The Story of Rimini," Coleridge, and the English translations of Schlegel mentioned by Wordsworth. The other root was in Italy, found in the Dante imitations of Byron and Shelley. With the exception of Hunt's "Rimini," practically every imitation of Dante before 1830 was written in Dante's country. It was suggested to the imitator neither by Cary's rendering nor by Schlegel's exegesis, but by the love of the Italian people for their great poet. "Why they talk Dante—write Dante—and think and dream Dante at this moment," wrote Byron from among them in 1821, "to an excess, which would be ridiculous, but that he deserves it." And he adds, anticipating Carlyle by two decades, "There is a gentleness in Dante beyond all gentleness." "I pass each day where Dante's bones are laid," he tells us in "Don Juan." Byron's well-meant though unsuccessful "Prophecy of Dante," in *terza rima*, was largely inspired by his Italian mistress, the Countess Guiccioli, who is said to have known "The Divine Comedy" by heart. His rides through Ravenna's "immemorial wood" accounted for his rather inadequate translation of the Francesca of Rimini episode. Such was the fascination of the threefold rhyme that he spoke of the "Prophecy" as his best work, and thought that the *terza rima* might have affected the metre of the fourth canto in "Childe Harold," making the stanzas run into each other. Among those stanzas there is one, written, not in England, but beside the great foreign dead of Santa Croce:

Ungrateful Florence! Dante sleeps afar,  
Like Scipio, buried by the upbraiding shore.

Dante had apparently become Byron's great world poet. In the Preface to "Cain" he said: "Since I was twenty I have never read Milton"; and Moore said that Byron "expressed to R[ogers] the same contempt for Shakespeare he has so often expressed to me."

That Shelley voiced to Medwin his dissatisfaction with all translations of Dante even Cary's; that he planned to render the whole "Divine Comedy" into English *terza rima*; and that he actually wrote a few lines of the intended work is evidence enough that his

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inspiration came from life in Italy not from volumes in England. His poems in Dante's metre and with an obvious attempt at the great poet's manner are of considerable bulk and high in quality, even if they are a hybrid product that is often not very much like the grim master of Tuscan song. The first of these is the unfinished "Prince Athanase," which in its pureminded but rather morbid self-analysis has more kinship with Byron's narratives or De Musset's "Namouna" than with the repentant but militant pilgrim through Purgatory. His famous "Ode to the West Wind" was mostly written in a wood by the Arno near Florence, near Dante's city; and there for once an Englishman drew a natural and compelling music from the foreign metre. In the brief "Tower of Famine," "The Woodman and the Nightingale," and "Matilda Gathering Flowers" the hand seems less practiced on the alien instrument. In Shelley's last, and incomplete, long poem, "The Triumph of Life," there is, however, a glory and an impetus of vision that, if not that of Dante, is certainly that of poetry.

Swift as a spirit hastening to his task  
Of glory and of good, the Sun sprang forth  
Rejoicing in his splendor, and the mask

Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth—  
The smokeless altars of the mountain snows  
Flamed above crimson clouds, and at the birth

Of light, the Ocean's orison arose.

The poem is confusing and incoherent in places, dream within dream, with the fluid obscurity of the German *Romantiker* not the overcompressed obscurity of Dante; yet Shelley's vision at times grows curiously like the older and greater one:

And then he pointed to a company,

Midst whom I quickly recognized the heirs  
Of Cæsar's crime, from him to Constantine;  
The anarch chiefs, whose force and murderous snares

Had founded many a sceptre-bearing line.

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This is the most Italian of all Shelley's poems. Not only is it in Dante's metre and with several verbal echoes of that poet, but the subject-matter is largely from Petrarch's "Trionfi," six poems in *terza rima*, and especially from the first, "The Triumph of Love over Man." It is the work of a half-Italianized English poet, the Shelley who wrote: "There is one solitary spot among those aisles, behind the altar, where the light of day is dim and yellow, under the storied window, which I have chosen to visit, and read Dante there." And again: "His apotheosis of Beatrice in Paradise and the gradations of his own love and her loveliness . . . is the most glorious imagination of modern poetry."

The debt of Byron and Shelley was by no means confined to poems in Italian metres. In 1817 Byron visited Ferrara, saw the original MSS. of Tasso's "Gierusalemme," and the cell in which he was confined. That visit called out "The Lament of Tasso," and also the briefer but better lines in "Childe Harold."

Ferrara, in thy wide and grass-grown streets,  
Whose symmetry was not for solitude,  
There seems as 'twere a curse upon the seats  
Of former sovereigns, and the antique brood  
Of Este, which for many an age made good  
Its strength within thy walls, and was of yore  
Patron or tyrant, as the changing mood  
Of petty power impell'd, of those who wore  
The wreath which Dante's brow alone had worn before.

And Tasso is their glory and their shame:  
Hark to his strain and then survey his cell.

"The Lament of Tasso," though not very successful, is a dramatic monologue; and one cannot help noticing how much this type and the closely related brief dialogue have been fostered by Italian influence. The best of Browning's "Dramatic Monologues" and Landor's "Imaginary Conversations" were written in Italy. "Barry Cornwall's" "Dramatic Scenes" were obviously composed under influence from that country.

The fourth canto of "Childe Harold" is a splendid panorama of



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Italy: Venice, "rising with her tiara of proud towers"; "blue Friuli's mountains"; the "tomb in Arqua;—rear'd in air"; "the fair white walls" of Florence; Clitumnus, with its "grassy banks whereon the milk-white steer Grazes"; "the fall of waters" at Velino; and Rome, the "lone mother of dead empires." The "deep and dark blue Ocean" of the magnificent closing address is the Mediterranean, the battleground of Roman and Venetian navies.

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee—  
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?

More than that, the poem is the work of a man who has repudiated his native country, and who, at times at least, feels toward Italy like an adopted son, as when he voiced his own mood through his paraphrase of Filicaja:

Italia! oh, Italia! thou who hast  
The fatal gift of beauty, which became  
A funeral dower of present woes and past,  
On thy sweet brow is sorrow plough'd by shame,  
And annals graved in characters of flame.  
Oh, God! that thou wert in thy nakedness  
Less lovely or more powerful, and couldst claim  
Thy right, and awe the robbers back, who press  
To shed thy blood and drink the tears of thy distress.

The year after this was printed Byron wrote to Murray: "I am sure my bones would not rest in an English grave, or my clay mix with the earth of that country."

Among minor effects, one cannot help wondering if the soft Mediterranean landscape did not show itself in the tropical descriptions of "The Island," which was dated at Genoa.

And sweetly now those untaught melodies  
Broke the luxurious silence of the skies,  
The sweet siesta of a summer day,  
The tropic afternoon of Toobonai,  
Where every flower was bloom, and air was balm,  
And the first breath began to stir the palm. . . .

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There sat the gentle savage of the wild,  
In growth a woman, though in years a child,  
As childhood dates within our colder clime  
Where naught is ripen'd rapidly save crime.

Byron's dramas, with the exception of "Manfred," were wholly conceived and executed in Italy. Two of them, "Marino Faliero" and "The Two Foscari," are founded on Venetian history, and in the Preface to the former Byron wrote: "Every thing about Venice is, or was, extraordinary—her aspect is like a dream, and her history is like a romance." Part of "The Deformed Transformed" is at mediæval Rome. It was while in Italy that Byron developed his perverse though by no means wholly mistaken theory of dramatic art, which was that of a modified and rejuvenated neo-classicism. This theory was obviously encouraged by the Pope-Bowles Controversy, then raging on the ink-stained fields of England;—but we cannot help asking if it did not owe something also to Alfieri, the neo-classic dramatist of modern Italy. "Childe Harold" includes Alfieri with Michael Angelo, Galileo, and Machiavelli among the mighty dead of Santa Croce; and Shelley wrote home in 1821 that Byron "is occupied in forming a new drama, and, with views which I doubt not will expand as he proceeds, is determined to write a series of plays, in which he will follow the French tragedians and Alfieri, rather than those of England and Spain." Shelley added very truly, "This seems to me the wrong road." "Manfred," which was written before the author fell into this *doctrinaire* mood, is worth all the later dramas put together. The critical theories preached in the Prefaces to these are faint Drydenic echoes, nothing more. In Byron's letters, however, we find evidence that he was darkly groping toward truths which the later experience of the theater has emphasized. The writing of a great tragedy "is not to be done by following the old dramatists, who are full of gross faults, pardoned only for the beauty of their language." "There is room for a different style of the drama; neither a servile following of the old drama, which is a grossly erroneous one, nor yet *too French*, like those who succeeded the older writers." The main trouble with Byron's plays was neither in his theories nor in the influences

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around him, but in the utterly undramatic character of his genius. "Manfred" is a great descriptive poem but a dramatic monstrosity.

Byron's chief debt to Italian life and literature is that they helped him to find himself in what would probably have been his best vein had he lived. There had been from boyhood a marked dualism in his writings, one-half of him sardonic and realistic, the other half sentimental and romantic. For years, like the damned in Milton's hell, he had been ferried back and forth between the fires of Werther and the icebergs of Racine. This dualism may have been partly due to the mixture of English and Scotch blood in him, partly to the alternation in his life of wild adventure and conventional society. The satirical Byron was naturally the greater; but as long as he played the slavish disciple of Queen Anne tradition he never realized his potentialities. Berni and Pulci supplied him with a weapon fitted to his hand; and the poetaster of the "Hints from Horace" became the great, mocking misanthrope of "Don Juan."

Italy evoked from Shelley one drama worth all of Byron's, "The Cenci." "On my arrival at Rome," wrote Shelley in the Preface, "I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest. . . . All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history, and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. . . . This national and universal interest which the story produces and has produced for two centuries and among all ranks of people in a great city, where the imagination is kept for ever active and awake, first suggested to me the conception of its fitness for a dramatic purpose." And the author almost makes himself an interpreter of Italian, rather than a creator of English thought when he adds: "In fact it is a tragedy which has already received, from its capacity of awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men, approbation and success. Nothing remained as I imagined, but to clothe it to the apprehensions of my countrymen in such language and action as would bring it home to their hearts." Turning to Shakespearean plays, Shelley compares his, not to the transplanted "Othello," but to "Lear," written on English ground of an English king as this was



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written on Italian ground of an Italian family, each a product of the country over which its terrible tradition had brooded for centuries. The religious feeling of the characters is Italian; and as such the author has to explain it to his far-off English audience. "Religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days. . . . It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. . . . It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. . . . Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check." The language of the tragedy is full of echoes from Shakespeare, especially from "Macbeth"; but the mood, the atmosphere, is that of those terrible confessions poured into the ear of Dante.

The "Prometheus Unbound" was less directly a product of the soil, yet it probably would have been different if written elsewhere. In the Note on it Mrs. Shelley wrote of her husband: "The charm of the Roman climate helped to clothe his thoughts in greater beauty than they had ever worn before. And, as he wandered among the ruins made one with Nature in their decay, or gazed on the Praxitelean shapes that throng the Vatican, the Capitol, and the palaces of Rome, his soul imbibed forms of loveliness which became a portion of itself. There are many passages in the 'Prometheus,' which show the intense delight he received from such studies, and give back the impression with a beauty of poetical description peculiarly his own." Shelley himself put it even more strongly: "The blue sky of Rome and the effect of the vigorous awakening of spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama."

With the exception of "Ozymandias" and the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," every one of Shelley's greatest short poems originated south of the Alps. The "Lines Among the Euganean Hills" "was written after a day's excursion among those lovely mountains"; and the introductory verses "image forth the sudden relief of a state of deep despondency by the radiant visions disclosed by the sudden burst of an Italian sunrise in autumn on the highest

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peak of those delightful mountains." It was over the Apennine that the cloud cried:

I sift the snow on the mountains below,  
And their great pines groan aghast.

It was through the pure air of Italy that his skylark sang "from heaven or near it." It was in the same climate, not in foggy England, that he composed the "Hymn of Apollo":

The sunbeams are my shafts, with which I kill  
Deceit, that loves the night and fears the day;

and also the "Lines Written in the Bay of Lerici":

When the moon had ceased to climb  
The azure path of Heaven's steep,  
And like an albatross asleep  
Balanced on her wings of light,  
Hovered in the purple night.

In the "Ode to Naples" he tells us that the ancient sculptures of Pompeii

Seemed only not to move and grow  
Because the crystal silence of the air  
Weighed on their life.

The Italian nature of many more perishable poems is shown by their bare titles: "Marenghi," "Fiordispina," "Ginevra." One of the best, "Epipsychidion," is prefaced by an almost literal translation from Dante; and we cannot help believing that Shelley's idealization of poor Emilia Viviani is an attempt to follow in Dante's footsteps, by making a very human female the symbol of eternal truth. In 1821 Shelley wrote to the idealized or allegorized Emilia:

Seraph of Heaven! too gentle to be human,  
Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman  
All that is insupportable in thee  
Of light, and love, and immortality!  
Sweet Benediction in the eternal curse!  
Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe!

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In October of that same year Shelley told John Gisborne: "The Epipsychidion is a mystery; as to real flesh and blood, you know that I do not deal in those articles"; and concerning the "real flesh and blood" Mary Shelley wrote: "Emilia has married Biondi; we hear that she leads him and his mother (to use a vulgarism) a devil of a life." "Epipsychidion" is like its own description of the moon, a "shrine of soft yet icy flame," that "warms not but illumines" like the cold starry fervor of the "Paradiso." Emilia was its ornamented image of the Virgin, a symbol to kneel before, not the true object of adoration.

Any one wishing to study the effect of landscape on poetry might profitably compare the opening lines of Crabbe's "Village" with those of Shelley's "Julian and Maddalo." There are certain common elements in both. In Lincolnshire

A length of burning sand appears,  
Where the thin harvest waves its withered ears;  
Rank weeds, that every art and care defy, etc.

At Venice we are shown

a bare strand  
Of hillocks, heaped from ever shifting sand,  
Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds.

But by the North Sea,

With mingled tints the rocky coasts abound,  
And a sad splendour *vainly* shines around;

and by the Adriatic,

How beautiful is sunset, when the glow  
Of Heaven descends upon a land like thee,  
Thou paradise of exiles, Italy!  
Thy mountains, seas and vineyards and the towers  
Of cities they encircle!—it was ours  
To stand on thee, beholding it.

Mary Shelley, back in England in 1824, seemed to feel that she had exchanged the land of poetry for one of prose. "What a divine place



Italy is! It seems to mature all gentle feelings, and to warm with peculiar sensibility an affectionate heart; its winds whisper a thousand expressions of kindness—clouds vanish from the mind as from the sky. Here, methinks a cold rain falls upon the feelings, and quenches the living spark that was lighted there.” Hunt said of Genoa: “You learn for the first time in this climate, what colors really are. No wonder it produces painters. An English artist of any enthusiasm might shed tears of vexation, to think of the dull medium through which blue and red come to him in his own atmosphere, compared with this.”

The personal relations of Byron and Shelley while in Italy were at times cordial and at times distant, the feelings of Shelley running through those painful vicissitudes which might be expected in the presence of a great genius but a morbidly vicious man. Their influence on each other's poetry was probably less than had been the case during their previous brief acquaintanceship in Switzerland. At that time they had both been more young and impressionable; and Byron had not yet in the *cloaca maxima* of Venetian vice acquired habits which made even his fellow poet look askance. The “Prometheus,” if it owed some of its revolutionary Titanism to Byron, owed a debt contracted years back before “The Revolt of Islam” was written. It is obvious that Byron succeeded only in following the mocking side of Italian literature, Shelley only in following the serious one. The moods produced by landscape and ruin were naturally more similar. Shelley wrote of Rome in language that immediately suggests “Childe Harold.” “Rome is a city, as it were, of the dead, or rather of those who cannot die, and who survive the puny generations which inhabit and pass over the spot which they have made sacred to eternity.” But such common moods very rarely found expression in the verse of both poets.

In 1822 Leigh Hunt came to Italy to coöperate with Byron and Shelley in producing a new magazine, *The Liberal*. The death of Shelley almost immediately after Hunt's arrival, and the collapse of Byron's interest made the periodical doomed from the start. Only four numbers of it appeared; but during its brief life it became a channel for pouring Italian translations and imitations into Eng-

land, translations and imitations which the English public rejected as undesirable immigrants. Byron's part included the translation of Pulci's "Morgante Maggiore," Canto I, and the great but ill-timed "Vision of Judgment" which in the words of Hunt, "played the devil with all of us." The rest of the Italian element in *The Liberal* had no great intrinsic value, but considerable bulk. Hunt wrote two satires, "The Dogs" and "The Book of Beginners," in metre and mood washed-out imitations of "Don Juan" and "Beppo." "The Florentine Lovers" was not great, nor was Mrs. Shelley's "Giovanni Villani." Several unidentified translations from Alfieri were included among the verse. *The Liberal* was a straw showing which way the wind blew; but the wind passed over it and it was gone.

Hunt remained in Italy three years, and so had an opportunity to increase his knowledge of Italian literature and sympathy for it. This counted much later (in 1846) when he published his "Stories from the Italian Poets," containing prose summaries or loose renderings of "The Divine Comedy" and of poems by Ariosto, Boiardo, Pulci, and Tasso, with comments, critical notices, and occasional passages versified. Much earlier than that he wrote his best drama, "The Legend of Florence," based on a romance of real life in an Italian periodical. After his return from Italy also Hunt extensively revised his "Story of Rimini" and freed the landscape descriptions "from northern inconsistencies." All that lies beyond the period which we are studying, but helps to show the directions in which literary currents were turning. Incidentally, on his voyage to the Mediterranean in 1822 Hunt's chief reading, besides "Don Quixote," was in Ariosto and Berni.

The isolated figure of Walter Savage Landor hardly belongs to a discussion of literary currents and eddies. They broke around his self-sufficient and unbending personality like swirling tides around a boulder. Yet even he was not left wholly unaffected. At first, indeed, it would seem as if he were a central figure in the Italian stream. He lived in Italy continuously from 1815 to 1832. He wrote about several famous people of that country. Memories of him mingle for the tourist with those of Byron, Shelley, and Hunt at Pisa, with those of Dante and Boccaccio at Florence. In the



country of ancient Rome he proved himself the most Roman of English authors. But when we ask ourselves, would he have written differently elsewhere we are by no means as sure of an affirmative answer as in the case of the other expatriated poets.

Not love but necessity brought him to Dante's country. During his first year of residence there his brother wrote: "He has seen nothing of Italy, and yet he swears that it contains nothing worth seeing." By 1823 he felt more kindly and said, "Italy and Greece are the only countries which I would pay a postilion eighteen pence to see"; but he never waxes as enthusiastic over Italian landscape or literature as Shelley did. There is no niche for him in the Dante movement. "Some time or other," he says, "I propose to finish Dante, which I began about eleven years ago, but wanted perseverance. A twentieth or thirtieth part of what I read was excellent." On Tasso he was even more severe. He had moderate admiration for Ariosto, who "is a Carnival poet," but "is never very bad," and enthusiasm enough for Boccaccio, "the greatest genius of Italy, or the continent." Also he was an admirer of Alfieri.

He had practically no connection, literary or personal, with the other expatriated authors. Shelley and Byron he never became acquainted with, though the former was living in Pisa when he was, and the latter came there only one month after his departure. Hunt and Hazlitt called on him, and were cordially received, but became no part of his life. Contrary to all natural expectations, the chief influence exercised on him was that of Southey, with whom he maintained for years an intimate correspondence. It is a question if he would have written his "Imaginary Conversations," though he had made some abortive attempts in the same line years before, had he not been fired by the fact that Southey was composing dialogues. "I wish to God I could exchange the Lake of Como for the Lake of Keswick, just one evening," he wrote. When we add to this his glowing appreciation of Wordsworth, "In thoughts, feelings, and images not one amongst the ancients equals him," we are half tempted to consider Landor as the foreign legion of the Lakers' army. To realize that he was not one of an English poetical school in Tuscany, we need only read Wordsworth's letter to him: "It is reported



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here that Byron, Shelley, Moore, and Leigh Hunt (I do not know if you have heard of all these names) are to lay their heads together in some town of Italy for the purpose of conducting a journal to be directed against everything in religion, in morals, and probably in government and literature, which our forefathers have been accustomed to reverence." Landor always had a marked antipathy toward Byron, and at first toward Shelley, though this changed into genuine admiration after the latter's death. Of the dying Keats he naturally saw nothing. His own proudly defiant words, "What I write is not written on slate, and no finger, not of Time himself, who dips it in the clouds of years, can efface it," is in dramatic contrast with the tragic inscription on the boy poet's humble headstone in the cemetery of Caius Cestius.

None the less from 1821 to 1829 Landor was living in or near Florence, near the "mighty dust" of Santa Croce; and there during those years he wrote about one hundred "Imaginary Conversations," most of which were published in England within that period. They deal with all ages, ancient or modern, with Greece, Rome, Italy, England, France, Russia, and the Iberian peninsula. Whether Landor owed much or little to his Italian environment, his continental life must have aided him in preparing for this vast sweep, which reminds us of Hugo's "Legend of the Centuries." And, whatever the cause, we must remember that, like Byron and Shelley, he first found himself, first produced his greatest and most characteristic work on Italian ground. What he might have done in England we know not; but he lived there until he was thirty-nine and produced nothing save unreadable conglomerations of magnificent verse passages. One of Landor's Conversations closes with a denial that climate affects genius. The climate of Austria is temperate and regular, but where are her great men? Florence where Landor did his best work has fogs in winter and stifling heat in summer, yet her men of genius are legion. "A town so little that the voice of a cabbage-girl in the midst of it may be heard at the extremities, reared within three centuries a greater number of citizens illustrious for their genius than all the remainder of the Continent (excepting her sister Athens) in six thousand years."

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All of which seems to us very bad logic. Climate is only one force out of many in a writer's environment; and as far as it counts, the obvious conclusion would be that a variable climate like that of Florence is more conducive to genius than a mild and equable one, a theory which has recently been advanced by certain scientists.

But we are growing too theoretical and scientific. To return to literature, which after all is the gift of God, and not of the Weather Bureau. Besides his prose masterpieces, Landor wrote at this time a number of those masterly short lyrics which were published much later. They are as condensed as Tacitus, as vivid as "Livy's pictured page," Roman in the land of Rome.

My hopes retire; my wishes as before  
Struggle to find their resting-place in vain:  
The ebbing sea thus beats against the shore;  
The shore repels it; it returns again.

It was in Italy that Landor definitely abandoned Latin for English as the medium of his shorter poems. An esthetic aristocrat, he may have wished for them a language unprofaned by landlords, butchers, slanderers, or political orators; and in a foreign country English became such a language. In Great Britain it was the common pavement for every one to tread; at Florence it was the reserved space behind the altar rail. Certain it is that the best poetry and prose of Landor was produced by a man no longer a spiritual citizen of his fatherland. "My country now is Italy, where I have a residence for life," he declared; and "nothing but the education and settlement of my children would make me at all desirous of seeing England again."

The Italian tendency in English literature ran parallel to a similar and exactly contemporary one in Germany. It was part of an international wave. Ricarda Huch tells us that among the Germans "Italy was frequently visited, and but few of the romanticists did not learn to know it. . . . The romantic painters felt at once the attractive power of the Romish Church and the dimly anticipated rapture of the South. . . . Before the first pictures of Bellini and Giotto, which Jonas Veit saw, he felt as if he must melt into tears



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or die of bliss. For the classical poets, Lessing, Schiller, Goethe, Italy was also the land of longing; but at the same time their feeling had not the romantic character, precisely because the pilgrimage to the Church was lacking. For them Italy was the classical land, where the author developed a sense of measure and form, refining and toning down the inborn barbarousness of the North. On the contrary the Romanticists sought in Italy the nature of the South as exuberance, abundance, sensuous rapture; not culture but fragmentary culture, the return to savage nature, loosening of ties. Zacharias Werner declared that he must go at once to Italy, 'not to work there, where follies were plenty, but to forget himself and everything else among ruins and flowers.' It was a powerful impulse like that of man toward woman, an impulse toward intoxication, toward freedom from measure and rule, toward beauty in its wild state. . . . The genuine romantic Italy is painted by Eichendorff: The land full of devastated palaces, full of gardens grown wild, where marble statues lead a lonely, enchanted life, where nothing moves but ancient fountains, where there breathes a sultry and intoxicating perfume, where memory and the past move among ruins, where dangerous physical attractions everywhere ensnare the heart. Of modern Italy he knew little more than that it was the land of the Pope, the throne of the Church. . . . In another of Eichendorff's prose romances a young man enters Rome at evening. . . . 'It seemed to him as if he were entering into a splendid fairy tale.' . . . We gain wholly different pictures of Italy from the pens of Ringseis, Görres, Carus, for whom Italy also possessed a special attraction. . . . Models of realistic-romantic description are found in the journals of Carus about his travels in Italy. 'Italy, receive your old lover kindly,' he cries, touched at heart, when after thirteen years he treads again the threshold of the land of beauty."

The English and German authors neither met nor influenced each other perceptibly in Italy. Their differences are those of race, their likenesses due to a common environment. Among both were sown the seeds of later pre-Raphaelitism in art and literature. Landor, says Sidney Colvin, "anticipated the modern predilection for the pre-Raphaelite masters, whose pictures were then in no demand."



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Both nations had men like Goethe and Landor who strengthened from Italian inspiration the "classic" sense of form. Both had writers like Shelley and Eichendorff to whom Italy was a glorious dreamland, though no Englishman in this field became so visionary as the transcendental Teuton. After the fall of Napoleon, from England, from Germany, and to a lesser but perceptible degree, from France, poetry followed in the path of Alaric and pitched its tent on the plains of Lombardy or by the banks of the Tiber.

## CHAPTER XI

### *Popular Taste and Minor Tendencies, 1815-1830*

THE popular demand for new books of poetry during the first decade of the nineteenth century was considerable and apparently increased, reached its maximum during the first half of the second decade, and fell off rapidly during the third. The popularity of Byron was partly due to the fact that he was launched on the rising wave. To be sure, he was one of the chief creators of it; but Scott, Campbell, and Moore had all set it in motion before him. The unpopularity of Keats and Shelley, though inherent in the nature of their work, was aided by the fact that they met the falling tide just when they should have emerged from obscurity. Whatever effect great wars have or do not have on the poetry of a nation, the general demand for verse in England began to decline not long after Waterloo. Even the marked intellectual impetus given by the sudden opening of continental Europe could not keep it long at flood. Sales fell off, and if taste improved within a chosen circle it deteriorated among the reading masses. Before 1816 the popular demand had been for what was virile and second rate, "Marmion" and "The Corsair." Afterward its languid preference was given to the prudish, sentimental, and third rate, to Mrs. Hemans, Letitia Landon, Mary Mitford, the "too lovey" verse of Procter, or at best to Moore's "Lalla Rookh," a rather effeminate substitute for "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" or "The Giaour." "The atmosphere seems no longer the same as when it was weighed down and rendered heavy by the powerful bad angel Napoleon," declared a *Blackwood's* contributor regarding literature; but the change to which he testified was by no means an unmixed blessing.

The period after 1815 begins with Byron in the height of his

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—renown. He still, according to Procter, "in 1818 was the most popular poet of his day"; but the widespread excitement against him after the scandal of 1816 combined with the foreign and misunderstood character of his later works to push him from his throne. *Blackwood's* in 1822 printed a facetious rhymed "Critique," which is probably a fair index of public feeling and which began:

So the public at length is beginning to tire on  
The torrent of poesy pour'd by Lord Byron.

His kingdom fell to pieces, Moore reigning leisurely over the larger fragment of it. After 1820 the popular supremacy in literature reverted to Scott in his character as novelist; and there was no longer any undisputed monarch of poetry.

— In Scotland the reading public frankly turned its back on verse and demanded prose. In 1817 *Blackwood's* declared: "Poetry is at present experiencing the fickleness of fashion, and may be said to have had its day. Very recently, the reading public, as the phrase is, was immersed in poetry, but seems to have had enough." In England, while the reputation of Wordsworth and Coleridge was growing among the discerning few, the majority made poetry a fad, and produced a spurious enthusiasm almost as discouraging to genius as the outspoken disapproval north of the Tweed. The reviewer of Leigh Hunt's poems in *The London Magazine* said in 1820: "We have, probably, at this time, more persons who make the admiration of poetry their outward boast, and fewer who make the love of it their inward happiness, than at any former period since the revival of letters. . . . Poetry is the reigning belle of the day—admired by all, and loved by none."

— Contemporary with this false vogue of poetry came a marked increase in the number of minor poets. Southey wrote of them in 1818: "They are become marvelously abundant in England; so that publications which twenty years ago would have attracted considerable attention, are now coming from the press in shoals unnoticed." Three years later Wordsworth said rather petulantly: "As to poetry, I am sick of it; it overruns the country in all the shapes of the plagues of Egypt." *Blackwood's* in 1822 speaks of two thousand



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very respectable poets living at that time, and a few months later said: "The land is overflowing with poetry as with milk and honey." According to Lockhart, when Tom Moore visited Scott in 1825, "the commonness of the poetic talent in these days was alluded to. 'Hardly a Magazine is now published,' said Moore, 'that does not contain verses which some thirty years ago would have made a reputation.'—Scott turned with his look of shrewd humor, as if chuckling over his own success, and said, 'Ecod, we were in the luck of it to come before these fellows'; but he added, playfully flourishing his stick as he spoke, 'we have, like Bobadil, taught them to beat us with our own weapons.' " "Poetry, nay good poetry, is a drug in the present day," declared Scott later in the same year. Such a jungle growth of pseudo-genius could not fail to make the recognition of true genius more difficult; the reader who had already filled his bookshelves with the lollypops of L. E. L. and the exotics of Milman might naturally hesitate before adding the "Eve of St. Agnes."

Meanwhile the most unreasonable and unliterary type of prudishness was rampant everywhere. Our own age has gone so far to the other extreme in literature that it is a profound experience to study the public which collided with Byron's "Cain." "The reign of Cant in England is growing wider and stronger each day," wrote Mary Shelley in disgust, after her return from Italy. "*John Bull* (the newspaper) attacked the licenser of the theaters for allowing a piece to pass with improper expressions; so the next farce was sent back to the theater with a note from the licenser to say that in the farce there were nine *damns*, and two equivocal words which, considering what *John Bull* said, he could not permit to pass." Lamb, a much more unprejudiced witness, ascribed the failure of a certain play partly to the fact that one of the characters was a fallen woman, "a most unfortunate choice in this moral day." The audience were as scandalized as if you were to introduce such a person to their private tea-tables." Crofton Croker in 1828 wrote regarding the popular failure of Lady Morgan's "O'Briens and O'Flaherties": "Colburn, I hear, swears that Jerdan's having discovered it was an improper book for ladies to read has cost him five hundred pounds." In the

prefatory essay to his 1830 edition of Webster's plays, Dyce comments on the coarse language of Elizabethan drama, and says of his own day: "But the public taste has now reached the highest pitch of refinement, and such coarseness is tolerated in our theaters no more." He adds suggestively that perhaps "the language of the stage is purified in proportion as our morals have deteriorated."

A curious evidence of the change in attitude between the mid-eighteenth century and 1820 is given in Lockhart's "Life of Scott." The great novelist had procured for a grand-aunt some novels of Aphra Behn, which she had not opened for decades. "The next time I saw her afterwards," wrote Scott, "she gave me back Aphra, properly wrapped up, with nearly these words: 'Take back your bonny Mrs. Behn; and, if you will take my advice, put her in the fire, for I found it impossible to get through the very first novel. But is it not,' she said, 'a very odd thing that I, an old woman of eighty and upwards, sitting alone, feel myself ashamed to read a book which, sixty years ago, I have heard read aloud for the amusement of large circles, consisting of the first and most creditable society in London.' This, of course," added Sir Walter, "was owing to the gradual improvement of the national taste and delicacy." In 1823, Scott, one of the purest-minded men in Europe, was compelled by his publisher to recast some twenty-four pages of "St. Ronan's Well," lest the original version might strike the chaste public as "improper."

Perhaps this moral attitude had something to do with a minor literary wave, the Hebraic. This was an offshoot of the general Orientalizing tendency, but fostered by the Bible and the pulpit, as the tales of Oriental harems were not. One of the first evidences of it was "The World Before the Flood" (1812) by that most excellent man, that once rather popular and to-day rather boresome poet, James Montgomery. This long epic has some flashes of good description, but, like the people which it describes, has now become extinct. The Hebraic element continues in the author's hymns, some of which have genuine merit, and many of which are widely used by American churches. Byron's "Hebrew Melodies" in 1815 gave added popularity to Scriptural themes, and contained at least one masterly



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lyric, however insincere they may ring at times. In his later Old Testament dramas, "Cain" and "Heaven and Earth," Byron must have seemed to Bible readers like Hassan in Moore's "Fire-worshippers," brooding over the sacred Koran,

Unblushing, with thy Sacred Book,  
Turning the leaves with blood-stained hands,  
And wresting from its page sublime  
His creed of lust and hate and crime.

In the same year with "The Hebrew Melodies" Joseph Cottle, that invaluable weathercock as to literary tendencies, published his unreadable "Messiah." Not many months later came the "Sacred Songs" of Moore, a number of which deal rather feebly with the history of ancient Israel, but contain abundant evidence that the author had recently reviewed both the Bible and the writings of Josephus. Bishop Heber followed the same path as Montgomery with less success, and left a fragmentary "World Before the Flood" as well as various other Biblical narratives. A third handling of the Deluge and the Antediluvians is found in Dale's "Irak and Adah, a Tale of the Flood," which came out a decade later than Montgomery's epic, and which, like its contemporary poems, "Adonais" and "The Eve of St. Agnes," used the romantic stanza of Spenser. There is some excellent description in the poem. *Blackwood's*, in a very favorable review, placates the prudish age by announcing that heads of families "cannot lay before young eyes a more pure and instructive page than that of Mr. Dale." It was at that very time that the clergymen of England were thrown into spasms by Byron's "Cain," so curiously do the threads of literary influence get criss-crossed. Several minors turned out brief lyrics on ancient Palestine, George Croly, for example, writing verses on Jacob's dream and Christ's entry into Jerusalem. For better or worse, the thing was in the air; and in 1817 we find James Hogg lamenting that "save two or three Hebrew Melodies, I have not written a line since I left Edinburgh."

The most popular and consistent representative of this current was the Rev. Henry H. Milman, whose Biblical dramas, "The Fall of Jerusalem," "The Martyr of Antioch," and "Belshazzar," ap-



peared between 1820 and 1822. The second has some points of likeness to Chateaubriand's "Les Martyrs," published in France thirteen years before; and the third handles a theme, Belshazzar's last banquet, which poet and painter of that time wore sadly threadbare. There is little of enduring quality in Milman's rhetoric, his magnificent stucco palaces of words; but he met for a short time with an enthusiastic welcome. "A glorious poem," Heber called "The Fall of Jerusalem." Mrs. Hemans, who herself produced a number of Hebraic lyrics, wrote of "The Martyr of Antioch": "It has added another noble proof to those you had already given the world of the power and dignity which genius derives from its consecration to high and sacred purposes." This enthusiasm was not confined to Milman's fellow Hebraists, for *The Quarterly Review* called his "Fall of Jerusalem" a poem, "to which, without extravagant encomium, it is not unsafe to promise whatever immortality the English language can bestow." *Blackwood's* in a later and wiser article justly complained that the author had been spoiled by the overpraise of reviewers. Even during the hour of its glory, Milman's popularity had something false and hollow about it, unlike the genuine enthusiasm felt for earlier favorites. In the year of his "Belshazzar" this was the judgment of Mary Mitford: "I fancy that nine-tenths of Mr. Milman's readers care as little for poetry as you do; only that very few have the honesty to say so. They read him for fashion, for the honor and glory of reading a poem, and the soberer credit of reading a good book. It's a sort of union of sermon and romance—a Sunday evening amusement which mamas tolerate and papas smile upon. So, the book sells; and it ought to sell."

This Hebraic tendency in literature ran parallel to a similar one in painting, although in the latter field it was less of an innovation. Between 1811 and 1817 the two Anglicized American painters, Benjamin West and his disciple Washington Allston, exhibited in England a series of pictures on Scriptural subjects, "Christ Healing the Sick," "Death on the Pale Horse," "Jacob's Dream," and others. It was a new departure with them, the earlier work of West having dealt mainly with classical history. In 1817 Allston wrote to Washington Irving regarding his own "Belshazzar": "Don't you think

it a fine subject? I know not any that so happily unites the magnificent and the awful: a mighty sovereign, surrounded by his whole court, intoxicated with his own state—in the midst of his revellings, palsied in a moment under the spell of a preternatural hand." During the same period, but beginning somewhat earlier, Haydon, the friend of Keats, painted "The Judgment of Solomon," "Christ's Entry into Jerusalem," "Christ's Agony in the Garden," and "Lazarus," all completed before 1822, the year of Milman's "Belshazzar." In 1818 one finds Mary Mitford eying critically Wilkie's "dirty 'Bathsheba,'" as well as "Mr. Ward's sprawling 'Angel,' and Mr. Hofland's exquisite 'Jerusalem.'" The paintings of West, at least, were popular and influential.

Both in art and literature this tendency appears to have run its course and produced something of a reaction. Milman tells us that "Belshazzar" found a much colder reception than its predecessors; and the next year Joseph Severn in Italy wrote of his "Lorenzo di Medici": "Why I take this subject is—first, I am, and everybody else is, sick of sacred ones." Charles Wells's "Joseph and his Brethren," which has been discussed elsewhere, in 1824 fell dead from the press, and this in spite of the fact that its rich grandiloquence of language, though better than Milman's, has a certain kindred element.

All the phenomena alluded to so far, the collapse of Byron's vogue, the multitude of minor poets, and the rise of the Hebrew wave, are gone over sardonically in the eleventh canto of "Don Juan." The hero in London

saw ten thousand living authors pass,  
That being about their average numeral;  
Also the eighty "greatest living poets,"  
As every paltry magazine can show *its*.

Byron himself, we are told,

Was reckoned a considerable time  
The grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme.  
But "Juan" was my Moscow, and "Faliero"  
My Leipsic, and my Mount Saint Jean seems "Cain." . . .

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Sir Walter reigned before me; Moore and Campbell  
Before and after; but now grown more holy,  
The muses upon Sion's hill must ramble  
With poets almost clergymen, or wholly.

These lines were apparently written early in 1823.

Less popular than the Hebraic current, but of more enduring value, was the Hellenic, which was also an offshoot of Orientalism. It is most prominent in the writings of the Hunt circle, but by no means confined to them. Shortly before 1823 the Rev. George Croly wrote a considerable amount of verse on Greek themes, including "Gems, from the Antique," a series of short poems, each accompanied by an engraving of the carved gem on which the lines are based. Meanwhile the Greek war for liberty had begun; and in 1822 Campbell composed his "Song of the Greeks,"

Again to the battle, Achaïans,

soon followed by his "Stanzas on the Battle of Navarino." Tom Moore became interested, read many books about ancient or modern Hellas, and in 1826 printed his very flabby "Evenings in Greece." Between Keats's "Endymion" and "Hyperion" had appeared Thomas Hope's prose romance, "Anastasius, or Memoirs of a Greek, written at the Close of the Eighteenth Century," which Miss Mitford at first attributed to Byron because it seemed to her so "altogether Grecian." A little later we find Miss Mitford herself "so in love with Aeschylus and Sophocles . . . that I can really hardly think or talk of anything else." Articles on ancient or modern Greece abound in the leading magazines of the period.

There was a widespread interest also in modern foreign literatures. *The London Magazine*, though the foremost, was not the only periodical to open its pages for articles and reviews on continental activities in that general awakening and unrest voiced by De Quincey. "We have hitherto seen no rational criticism on Greek literature; nor, indeed, to say the truth, much criticism which teaches anything, or solves anything, upon any literature." George Borrow in 1826 published an immature and little-noticed volume of translations from the Danish, the major part of it taken from the



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contemporary poet and dramatist, the greatest of Danish romanticists, Oehlenschläger. Carlyle and De Quincey were at work introducing German literature into England. Along with this, though not through the same purveyors, came the pseudo-sciences of the German Romantic period, the phrenology of Gall and Spurzheim, the physiognomy of Lavatar, and the animal magnetism of Mesmer. These "inflammatory branches of learning" were much discussed among the idle and young of London around 1825.

In general, the closing years of the romantic generation were marked less by the formation of new tendencies than by the decay and degradation of old ones. After 1822 few new notes are heard even among the great writers, and those few are unheeded by the public. All the old tendencies are going to seed; all the old fields being worked to death by swarming imitators. Dreary is the picture given by Washington Irving in 1823: "There are such quantities of these legendary and romantic tales now littering from the press both in England and Germany, that one must take care not to fall into the commonplace of the day. Scott's manner must likewise be widely avoided." Byron bears similar testimony in "Don Juan":

I won't describe; description is my forte,  
But every fool describes in these bright days  
His wondrous journey to some foreign court,  
And spawns his quarto, and demands your praise,  
Death to his publisher, to him 'tis sport;  
While Nature, tortured twenty thousand ways,  
Resigns herself with exemplary patience  
To guide-books, rhymes, tours, sketches, illustrations.

The most interesting figure among these shoals of imitators was Mrs. Hemans. Her pliant, receptive, ultra-feminine mind molded itself to her time as a devoted wife molds her character to her husband's wishes. Consequently her poetry becomes a thermometer of taste for her age and so acquires an extrinsic value which it does not possess as pure literature. Every transitory wave of literary enthusiasm in her generation has left its impress on the yielding sand of her imagination. Her creative period ran from 1816 to 1834, from the first appearance of Keats to the first triumphs of Tenny-

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son. In 1821 the *Quarterly Review*, which had lashed "Endymion," spoke of her with kindly praise; and mentioned her vogue as recent but already considerable. For years her verse was widely read while that of Keats and Shelley gathered dust on bookstore shelves. Because she was the voice of the more superficial thought of her time, she was overrated in her own day; and for that very reason she is underrated in ours. She wrote from the romantic depths of a woman's dream world, and in an ancient story of morbid passion and intrigue could see nothing but the triumph of pure affection:

Who called thee strong as death, O Love?  
Mightier thou wast and art.

Such uncritical enthusiasm jars on the scientific temper of our own day. Yet she was one of the most musical and picturesque of minor poets; and her feeling was as sincere as her intellectual horizon was limited.

It is her historical position, however, rather than her poetical merit which makes her worth lengthy discussion. To read her collected poems is to chart all the currents of popular taste from Waterloo to the death of Scott. "Ossian," whose vogue was yet widespread, leaves many traces, as in the description of the deserted Alhambra:

Within thy pillar'd courts the grass waves high.

The Byronic hero occasionally appears,

And all—except the heart he brings—is peace.

At other times we have the rich Oriental color of "The Giaour" and "Lalla Rookh."

Last night a sound was in the Moslem camp,  
And Asia's hills re-echoed to a cry  
Of savage mirth!—Wild horn, and war-steed's tramp,  
Blent with the shout of barbarous revelry;

or we encounter a glowing description of a Hindu city, an account based on Forbes's "Oriental Memoirs." She follows in the wake of Milman's and Heber's Hebraic verse with her "Belshazzar's

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Feast" and similar poems, and in the wake of Keats and Shelley with a dozen Hellenic lyrics and "Modern Greece," rich with the spoils of time,—and of "Childe Harold," Canto II.

Where are the Fauns, whose flute-notes breathe and die  
On the green hills?—the founts, from sparry caves  
Through the wild places bearing melody?

wails the exile from ancient Hellas. She admires with the disciples of Chateaubriand "the forest primeval" beyond the Atlantic.

The woods—oh! solemn are the boundless woods  
Of the great western world when day declines.  
And louder sounds the roll of distant floods,  
More deep the rustling of the ancient pines.

Though founded on an American work, "Sketches of Connecticut," this passage sounds like a direct borrowing from certain passages in "Le Génie du Christianisme." In several poems she responded with alacrity to the growing enthusiasm for both ancient and modern Italy:

Home of the Arts! where glory's faded smile  
Sheds lingering light o'er many a mouldering pile;  
Proud wreck of vanish'd power, of splendor fled,  
Majestic temple of the mighty dead.

Above all things else, however, Mrs. Hemans, like the poetry readers of her age, turned to sentimentalized medievalism. All the different types of this which her age evolved one after the other are found in her pages. There is German medievalism, as usual rather more wild and ghostly than the other varieties, with its *Heilige Vehm*e,

that awful band,  
The Secret Watchers of the land,  
They that, unknown and uncontroll'd  
Their dark and dread tribunal hold;

or with its revived horrors from Scott and Bürger,

As the Wild Night-Huntsman pass'd.



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There is Scandinavian medievalism, as in the "Valkyriur Song," a rather weak anti-climax to Gray's "Fatal Sisters." There is English medievalism, with more history and fewer ghosts, as in "The Troubadour and Richard Coeur de Lion," where the poetess re-touches a theme handled by Tom Warton in the dim dawn of romantic medievalism. Then there are a whole succession of armored knights and turbaned Moors from ancient Spain, glimpses of

the clear, broad river flowing  
Past the old Moorish ruin on the steep,

and of rocks that have

echo'd to the tale  
Of knights who fell in Roncevalles' vale,

for which local color, as usual in the South, replaces the supernatural thrill associated with northern antiquity. Last and most important comes a considerable volume of "Welsh Melodies," one of them, "Prince Madoc's Farewell," dealing with the hero of Southey's longest epic, and others that point back to "The Bard" of Gray, or that may have helped to call forth the partly romantic, mainly satirical Welsh past in Peacock's "Misfortunes of Elphin." Over all, that sentimentalism which the early nineteenth-century public inherited from the late eighteenth sparkles like a dew of tears; and over all we trace the mood which made Mrs. Hemans exclaim:

Alas! that aught so fair should fly,  
Thy blighting wand, Reality!

Yet the fair authoress was more genuine in following these different currents than may at first appear. Her Welsh medievalism was inspired by her residence in Wales. Her Spanish enthusiasm began when her brothers, as soldiers, were serving in the Iberian peninsula. Her enthusiasm for Italy must have owed something to the fact that she was partly of Italian blood. More than that, she wrote in a period when the various national "romantic movements" were flowing together, and creating a genuine interest in many currents. Minor though she is, a study of her sources and the mottoes quoted before her poems leads one to Herder, the German; to Oehlen-

schläger, the Dane; and to Lamartine and Chateaubriand among the French *romantiques*. Also as a translator she rendered into English poetry by the Portuguese Camoens, the Spanish Lope da Vega, and by Tasso, Filicaja, and Metastasio among the Italians. Her Protean muse and gently sentimental vein remind one of Procter, but she differed from him in this, that he took on the poetical characteristics of various literary groups with which he associated, whereas she associated with no group and imitated from a distance. Both were pure-minded, kind-hearted, mediocre poets, who gave the kind-hearted, mediocre public what it wanted, and now pay the penalty for former applause by being too severely overlooked.

Mrs. Hemans was well received both by the general public and by the discerning few. There followed her one who was justly ignored by the great critics and poets of her own age, but who commanded an even wider circle of readers. This was Letitia Landon, the "L. E. L." of periodical fame. As poetry her work is naught, but as a literary phenomenon she has her little niche in history. All of her verse was written between 1820 and 1830. Her most popular work, the "Improvisatrice," appeared in the year of Byron's death and the publication of Shelley's posthumous poems. While the latter were being neglected, six editions of Miss Landon's masterpiece were called for in about a year. Her poem is the life history of a young lady brought up in an atmosphere of music and art, who paints romantic pictures, and improvises various romantic poems, one a Moorish tale, another a medieval story, turning on a witch, a love philtre, and a poisoned young gentleman. The improvisatrice falls in love with a Radcliffean or Byronic hero, possessing the "raven curls" of stock romance. He marries another. The broken-hearted bluestocking relieves her feelings by telling in verse the Greek tale of Leades and Cydippe, and then passes away in a genteel consumption. The poem is full of moonlight, dark pines, Italian atmosphere, and mawkish sentimentality. Miss Landon followed this up with "Roland's Tower," a legend of medieval Germany; "The Troubadour," a long rhyming romance in the manner of Scott; and "The Golden Violet," a series of tales in a narrative

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framework like Hogg's "Queen's Wake"; all of which are the most unmixed and unrelieved type of pseudo-medievalism.

'Twas a fair sight, that arm'd array,  
Winding through the deep vale their way,  
Helmet and breast-plate gleaming in gold,  
Banners waving their crimson fold.

Or in some empty castle the author recalls

How through the portals sweeping came  
Proud cavalier and high-born dame.

A few discerning judges at one time found something in her. Laman Blanchard wrote her biography; and Mrs. Browning with sisterly feeling lamented the hour

when the glory of her dream withdrew,  
When knightly guests and courtly pageantries  
Were broken in her visionary eyes.

For years she contributed to *The Literary Gazette*, and her qualities are those usually found in popular magazine poets. She is said to have cleared at least £2500 from her writings, a small sum in the second decade of the century, but a large one in the third, when no one save Tom Moore probably fared much better. Herself a slavish imitator, she apparently had many imitators among infinitesimal versifiers, shadows of a shade.

— Meanwhile another current than those discussed, the "Gothic," was spreading out like them into a stagnant marsh, full of croaking imitators. The Gothic tradition, though closely related to the medieval, was essentially different in spell, its works often describing modern times, and depending mainly on the thrill of terror, whereas the other appealed chiefly to the love of the picturesque. From 1800 to 1815 the public was satiated with the "Gothic" terrors of Ann Radcliffe, and welcomed new works of the kind languidly. After that period the tale of terror once more came into its own with the masses, though frowned on by the more intelligent critics. The chief leader in the unpropitious revival was Maturin, an Irish clergyman. His blank-verse tragedy "Bertram," with its shipwrecked



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bandit hero, its thunderstorms and darkened abbeys, its trash and melodrama, had a great run both in print and on the stage just before the appearance of Keats's first volume. In 1820 appeared his novel, "Melmoth the Wanderer," which is at once one of the most worthless and one of the most ingenious of books. The hero wins length of days by selling his soul to the devil, who finally carries him off in a scene that wavers between the tragedy of Marlowe's "Faustus" and the absurdity of Lewis's "Monk." Previous to this, Melmoth has been married to an innocent and trusting girl in the dark by the animated corpse of a recently deceased hermit, under whose cold hand of blessing the bride shivers. The plot is curiously involved, story within story, a little like the *bizarre* plays of Tieck and Werner among the German *Romantiker*. Once more, as in Radcliffe's "Italian" and Lewis's "Monk," the reader treads the dungeons of the Inquisition and hears the wind whistle through the ruined vaults. This novel came out one year before De Quincey's "Confessions," and the two sold well side by side, for popularity, like misery, makes strange bedfellows.

Maturin was not a great man, and the other revivers of the "Gothic" were still less so. Except for an occasional stray sample, such as a few of the "Tales from Blackwood," most of their work is now utterly dead. Yet there is ample proof that during the third decade of the century there were plenty of these ephemeral horror-mongers. "A man who does not contribute his quota of grim stories nowadays," declared Hunt in 1819, "seems hardly to be free of the republic of letters. He is bound to wear a death's-head as part of his insignia. If he does not frighten everybody, he is nobody." In 1824 Lamb wrote to Bernard Barton that the word *unearthly* "is become a slang word with the bards; avoid it in future lustily."

It should be noted that all the writers discussed in this chapter, Milman, Heber, Hemans, L. E. L., Maturin, were comparatively isolated from social groups of other writers. They did not represent literary eddies in which new thoughts and traditions were evolved. When we place by them the only other poets whose new works were genuinely popular after 1820, Procter and Moore, we feel the chill with which the atmosphere of the period must have inspired men

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of genius. A letter of Beddoes in 1824 rings like a dirge: "The disappearance of Shelley from the world seems, like the tropical setting of that luminary to which his poetical genius can alone be compared, with reference to the companions of his day, to have been followed by instant darkness and owl-season: whether the vociferous Darley is to be the comet, or tender fullfaced L. E. L. the milk-and-watery moon of our darkness, are questions for the astrologers; if I were the literary weather-guesser for 1825 I would safely prognosticate fog, rain, blight in due succession for its dullard months." Five years later Lamb laments in the same dreary tone: "'Tis cold work Authorship, without something to puff one into fashion." The "Essays of Elia" did not reach a second edition until 1836.

While poetry and appreciative criticism were both on the decline, the field of critical theory produced one of the most exciting and fatuous conflicts in literary history, the Pope-Bowles Controversy. It began in 1819, and, though nominally a struggle between romantic and neo-classic standards, was really a symptom of the generally diseased condition of popular taste. In 1806 William Bowles, in publishing an edition of Pope, had relegated that poet to the high yet secondary rank long before assigned him by Joseph Warton and now generally indorsed by twentieth-century criticism. For a dozen years his remarks passed comparatively unnoticed save for a few lines in Byron's "English Bards"; but in 1819 Thomas Campbell in his "Specimens of the British Poets" defended Pope's character and genius, and especially took issue with an unlucky statement of Bowles that all poetry based on first-hand observation of nature and natural feeling is better than that based on description of artificial objects or of transitory manners. This paragraph became the corpse of Patroclus over which the two parties battled. Bowles replied to Campbell; Campbell replied to Bowles; Byron joined the anti-Bowlesites, and was followed by several less-known figures. Traces of the conflict are scattered through the pages of *The New Monthly Magazine*, *The London Magazine*, *The Quarterly*, and *Blackwood's*, to say nothing of a host of pamphlets on both sides. Charles Lloyd in 1821 published "Personal Essays on the Character of Pope as a Poet," verses in the traditional couplet



which, even when one of the "Lakers," he had loved. "We know that we took some small part in the contest," says a *Blackwood's* reviewer, "but have been racking our brain in vain, to recollect on which side we fought,—or indeed, what was the precise bone of contention between the belligerent powers." The rather incoherent discussion apparently revolved around the question whether the artificial life of manners could be a theme for the highest poetry, and whether Pope, as the chief master in that field, could be held a supreme genius. The contest raged hotly for about three years, and somewhat more languidly for about three more. By 1827 it appears to have died out. "The victory remained with Bowles," says Professor Beers, "not because he had won it by argument, but because opinion had changed." In the last analysis that statement is true; but it does not represent the impression held by all people at the time. D'Israeli, one of Byron's fellow warriors, declared with a note of triumph: "More than one edition of Pope followed; and Pope was righted."

The controversy was partly literary and partly personal. In both aspects it represented the general tension between the London society poets on the one hand and the rural and suburban ones on the other. Campbell and Byron, the leading protagonists for Pope, were both members of the Holland House circle. Of their minor allies, Octavius Gilchrist was born at Twickenham, Pope's home, was a contributor to *The Quarterly* and a friend of Gifford. The latter, like the elder D'Israeli, was a London man, and was called by Byron his literary father. William Roscoe of Liverpool was the only prominent figure in the Pope camp whose literary affiliations were not with the metropolis. Bowles, without being either a "Laker" or a "Cockney," represented, in the eyes of his enemies at least, the theories of both, and drew down on his head the electricity which had been gathering against Wordsworth and Southey, Keats and Hunt. The general attitude of the "Lakers" and "Cockneys" was more favorable toward Pope himself than toward either his imitators or his theory of art. Coleridge had praised him while condemning his disciples. Wordsworth knew thousands of his lines by heart; and pronounced him "a man most highly gifted; but unluckily he



took the plain when the heights were within his reach." Hunt in the early days of *The Examiner* modeled his style on Addison, Steele, Goldsmith, and Voltaire. When composing "Rimini" he felt Dryden "the most delightful name to me in English poetry," and even said that Pope "had been my closest poetical acquaintance." But in the Preface to "Foliage" Hunt defines admirably the attitude which so many poets held and which Bowles was rather confusedly defending: "The consequence of this re-awakening of the poetical faculty is not, as some imagine, a *contempt* for Pope and the other chief writers of the French school. It justly appreciates their wit, terseness, and acuteness; but it can neither confound their monotony with a fine music, nor recognize the real spirit of poetry in their town habits, their narrow sphere of imagination, their knowledge of manners rather than natures, and their gross mistake about what they call classical, which was Horace and the Latin breeding, instead of the elementary inspiration of Greece." In a footnote to the same volume Hunt makes a discerning and important criticism: "Pope, whom I consider a much greater poet by nature than he became from circumstances, was shut up by his bodily infirmities within a small and artificial sphere of life. He saw little or nothing of nature and natural manners. When he went out, he rode, and he was even carried into his boat in a sedan-chair."

It is easy to see how such an attitude would jar on the Holland House group of authors, all of whom lived a considerable part of their time in that very life of artificial manners which Hunt deplored, all of whom for years had written Pope imitations, and most of whom were confirmed neo-classicists in theory. They believed that Pope was supremely great *because* of his life and theory of art; their opponents that he was approximately great in spite of these. Moore, who was a personal friend of Bowles, maintained an amiable neutrality; but Byron and Campbell flew to arms.

This general tension was noticeably increased a little before the outbreak of 1819. In 1817 Keats, in his beautiful but immature "Sleep and Poetry," made a most radical attack on the Pope tradition. He called it

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a schism

Nurtured by foppery and barbarism;

and told its adherents,

Ye were dead

To things ye knew not of,—were closely wed  
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule. . . .

A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask

Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race! . . .

Holding a poor, decrepid standard out

Mark'd with most flimsy mottoes, and in large

The name of one Boileau!

As a picture of the late eighteenth-century Pope imitators this is not so unreasonable; as a picture of the Queen Anne wits themselves it would be absurd. In any case, one can easily see how such lines would rouse the wrath of Byron. "There is no bearing the driveling idiotism of the mannikin," he cries; yet the minute that he believes Keats a convert to the orthodox literary faith he forgets and forgives. His indignation, he says, had been due to Keats's depreciation of Homer which "hardly permitted me to do justice to his own genius. . . . He is a loss to our literature, and the more so, as he himself, before his death, is said to have been persuaded that he had not taken the right line, and was reforming his style upon the more classical models of the language." In 1818 Hunt said, "The downfall of the French school of poetry has of late been increasing in rapidity." In that same year Francis Hodgson published two poems in eighteenth-century style, "The Friends" and "Childe Harold's Monitor," both praising Pope. "The Friends" declared:

Not yet the wholesome dread of thee was o'er,

Proud wit!—but Dulness thrives, for Pope is now no more;

and the notes attacked those critics who depreciated "this energetic, melodious, and moral poet." Meanwhile Byron, exiled and bitter at his age, was growing more and more ripe for war. In 1817 he wrote to Murray: "With regard to poetry in general, I am convinced,

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the more I think of it, that he [Moore] and all of us—Scott, Southey, Wordsworth, Moore, Campbell, I—are all in the wrong, one as much as another; that we are upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system, or systems . . . from which none but Rogers and Crabbe are free; and that the present and next generations will finally be of this opinion. I am the more confirmed in this by having lately gone over some of our classics, particularly Pope, whom I tried in this way,—I took Moore's poems and my own and some others, and went over them side by side with Pope's, and I was really astonished (I ought not to have been so) and mortified at the ineffable distance in point of sense, harmony, effect, and even *Imagination*, passion, and *Invention*, between the little Queen Anne's man, and us of the lower empire. Depend upon it, it is all Horace then, and Claudian now, among us; and if I had to begin again, I would model myself accordingly." Coming as this does just when Byron was changing from a disciple of Wertherish romance to his greatest vein of satirical realism, it suggests that the discipleship to Pope was at least good for him. In 1818 he thought of defending Pope "against the world, in the unjustifiable attempts at depreciation begun by Warton and carried on to and at this day." Consequently when Bowles and Campbell lit their matches in 1819 the powder was all ready for the explosion.

Although Bowles's criticism was made soon after Austerlitz it produced no marked reaction until after Waterloo. The controversy was probably encouraged by the growing internationalism of literature and criticism, by echoes of literary battles on the continent fiercer than England ever knew. The critical warfare between classicists and romanticists in France was just beginning at that time, and a struggle of earlier origin in Germany was just becoming known to the British. Byron—whose entire part in the controversy, it must be remembered, was acted in Italy—wrote from Ravenna in 1820: "I perceive that in Germany, as well as in Italy, there is a great struggle about what they call '*Classical*' and '*Romantic*,'—terms which were not subjects of classification in England, at least when I left it four or five years ago. Some of the English Scribblers, it is true, abused Pope and Swift, but the reason was that they them-



selves did not know how to write either prose or verse; but nobody thought them worth making a sect of."

The number of magazine articles involved in the Pope-Bowles Controversy would seem to argue that the public felt some interest in the discussion. The gentlemen of the old *régime* were still fairly numerous; and the following speech, made by the aged painter Northcote some time before 1826, probably voiced the feelings of hundreds: "But consider how many Sir Walter Scotts, how many Lord Byrons, how many Dr. Johnsons there will be in the next hundred years; how many reputations will rise and sink in that time; and do you imagine, amid these conflicting and important claims, such trifles as descriptions of daisies and idiot-boys (however well they may be done) will not be swept away in the tide of time, like straws and weeds by the torrent? No; the world can only keep in view the principal and most perfect productions of human ingenuity; such works as Dryden's, Pope's, and a few others, that from their unity, their completeness, their polish have the stamp of immortality upon them."

The controversy was a symptom rather than a cause, a symptom of critical unrest. The great new poetry of the day was unpopular and even in its glory full of faults for which Pope would be a corrective. The popular poetry, by which the whole was too often judged, was genuinely decadent. Men were longing for a literary faith, and fearing to ground it on either the old or the new. Of the poets who had earlier imitated Pope, Byron and Rogers had turned away from his metre, however much indebted to his spirit. Campbell, on the contrary, who for twenty years had abandoned the couplet for ballad rhythm and Spenserian stanza, now returned to his old favorite—though, it is true, not to a very Augustan form of it—in "Theodoric" (1824). Among the poets who had earlier decried the Pope tradition, Keats just as the controversy began was taking Dryden as his metrical model, and Wordsworth was beginning to use rather frequently a modified form of the eighteenth-century metre. Coming at the end of a great creative period and at the beginning of a long barren one, the war of words had little influence on enduring literature.

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For a modern reader, the most interesting features of the critical battle are the picturesque figures of Bowles and Byron, the one so pleasantly amusing, the other so tensely dramatic. "I like a row, and always did from a boy," cried the dark-eyed peer; and in 1820: "I mean to plunge thick, too, into the contest upon Pope, and to lay about me like a dragon till I make manure of Bowles for the top of Parnassus." As for Bowles, Moore found "the mixture of talent and simplicity in him delightful," but complains of "the characteristic weakness and maudlin wordiness of his notes," and describes finding him "in the bar of the White Hart, dictating to a waiter (who acted as amanuensis for him) his ideas of the true sublime in poetry; never was there such a Parson Adams since the real one."

From the "Lyrical Ballads" to the death of Byron there is no period the creative works of which could be spared. But the years from 1824 to 1830 might be dropped bodily from our literature with little loss to poetry and only moderate loss to prose. No wonder *The London Magazine* fell from great literature to journalism when it met that chilling wave. It is with an Ossianic mood that the critic enters on these empty years, where the clinging ivies of Mrs. Hemans and L. E. L. rustle plaintively round the crumbling towers of romanticism. From 1824 to 1828 men bought poetry fairly well, though apparently rather through force of habit than through genuine enthusiasm. Then suddenly and sharply the sales of nearly all poetry fell with a thud. The year 1826 had been one of great commercial convulsion, affecting artists as well as business men; perhaps this financial blow pricked the bladder of conventionalized taste; but at any rate what happened is beyond question.

In 1829 Jeffrey, out of his years of experience, wrote: "Since the beginning of our critical career we have seen a vast deal of beautiful poetry pass into oblivion, in spite of our feeble efforts to recall or retain it in remembrance. The tuneful quartos of Southey are already little better than lumber:—and the rich melodies of Keats and Shelley,—and the fantastical emphasis of Wordsworth,—and the plebeian pathos of Crabbe,—are melting fast from the field of our vision. The novels of Scott have put out his poetry. Even the splendid strains of Moore are fading into distance and dimness,



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except where they have been married to immortal music; and the blazing star of Byron himself is receding from its place of pride. We need say nothing of Milman, and Croly, and Atherstone, and Hood, and a legion of others, who, with no ordinary gifts of taste and fancy, have not so properly survived their fame, as been excluded, by some hard fatality, from what seemed their just inheritance. The two who have the longest withstood this rapid withering of the laurel, and with the least marks of decay on their branches, are Rogers and Campbell." In that same year Carlyle also declared that Byron too, "with all his wild siren charming, already begins to be disregarded and forgotten." The next year Wordsworth wrote to Rogers: "He [Sharp] told me . . . that the sale of your 'Pleasures of Memory,' which had commanded public attention for thirty-six years had greatly fallen off within the last two years. The *Edinburgh Review* tells another story, that you and Campbell . . . are the only bards of our day whose laurels are unwithered. Fools! I believe that yours have suffered in the common blight." In 1829 Southey complained: "The sale of my books in Longman's hands, where the old standers used to bring in about £200 a year, has fallen almost to nothing"; and in 1831: "The sale of the works themselves is at a dead stop." Two other letters of Southey, in 1828 and 1829, show how trivial and superficial was even such interest in verse as remained. "With us no poetry now obtains circulation except what is in the *Annals*; these are the only books which are purchased for presents, and the chief sale which poetry used to have was of this kind." "At the best, Allan [Cunningham], these *Annals* are picture-books for grown children. They are good things for the artists and engravers."

In 1827 "The Shepherd's Calendar" of John Clare fell dead, though in 1820 his much inferior first volume had made him a nine days' wonder. Taylor undertook the later publication reluctantly, and warned Clare in advance that the taste for poetry was waning and the world demanding prose. The *annals*, he said, had got the upper hand, and Clare had better write for them. These pretty toys were bought for their gilt edges and morocco bindings, the enclosed poetry being tolerated as a necessary evil. In 1833 a bookseller



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told Clare that without such embellishments his poetry could not attract attention, since people were demanding the "high art" which the annuals furnished. The second part of Rogers's "Italy" in 1828 came out almost unnoticed. Then he issued a magnificent "embellished" edition, with costly bindings, and illustrations; and, though it was probably very little read, several thousand copies were bought—as *bric-a-brac*.

One variety of this literary type was the album, a silken Dagon to which Lamb bowed down in his "Album Verses" (1830). Three years earlier he had answered the question, What is an album? by describing it as

The soft first effusions of beaux and of belles,  
Of future Lord Byrons and sweet L. E. L.'s.

In 1825 Scott wrote in his diary: "*Nota bene*.—John Lockhart, and Anne, and I are to raise a Society for the Suppression of Albums. It is a most troublesome shape of mendicity. Sir, your autograph—a line of poetry—or a prose sentence!—Among all the sprawling sonnets, and blotted trumpery that dishonors these miscellanies, a man must have a good stomach that can swallow this botheration as a compliment." Romantic medievalism, nature worship, and all the rest, had become part of the fashionable frippery for conventional young ladies. Praed in 1828 represents a miss of that type sending a "Letter of Advice" to her friend:

Remember the thrilling romances  
We read on the bank in the glen;  
Remember the suitors our fancies  
Would picture for both of us then;  
They wore the red cross on their shoulder,  
They had vanquished and pardoned their foe—  
Sweet friend, are you wiser or colder?—  
My own Araminta, say "No!" . . .  
If he's sleepy while you are capricious,  
If he has not a musical "Oh!"  
If he does not call Werther delicious,  
My own Araminta, say "No!" . . .

If he speaks of a tax or a duty,  
 If he does not look grand on his knees,  
 If he's blind to a landscape of beauty,  
 Hills, valleys, rocks, waters, and trees,  
 If he dotes not on desolate towers,  
 If he likes not to hear the blast blow,  
 If he knows not the language of flowers,  
 My own Araminta, say "No!"

Such was the end of the age which Wordsworth began, Scott delighted, and Byron astounded. Annuals and albums! *Keep-sakes* that none to-day will keep, and *Forget-me-nots* that time has forgotten. Petty prettinesses in the midst of which even Letitia Landon would seem a poet.

Scott formed only an apparent exception to this general blight. The recent collapse of his fortunes had made him an object of sympathy to thousands; the desire to help that proud spirit who refused all other forms of help was probably more influential than the love of literature in selling his later novels. Even at that, they had no such vogue as "Ivanhoe." The only literature of any merit in general demand was realistic prose or the acting drama, in both of which fields some laurels were gleaned by Mary R. Mitford. Miss Mitford's "Our Village," which was in line with the realism of the Scotch minor novelists, was received with open arms. Her blank verse play "Rienzi," in which she anticipated Bulwer-Lytton, was a great success at Drury Lane theater in 1828, and if we may trust her statement, sold eight thousand copies in print within two months. At the same time she had a score of articles appearing in the annuals of the day. In 1832 the authoress was told that her name "would sell anything." But the triumph of humble prose, acting drama, and femininity only accented by contrast the decay of poetry, which was everywhere moribund. Wordsworth was increasing the number of his readers, but he was merely exchanging an extreme degree of unpopularity for a moderate one.

And what of the new generation? Already by 1830 Carlyle, Macaulay, Disraeli, Bulwer-Lytton, and Tennyson had appeared in print. Few of them, however, had attracted attention; none of

them stood at that time for definite movements or well organized theories of art. They were drifting, drifting in the fog and night that had overshadowed the intellectual life of England. And even these men published nothing in that desert valley between 1828 and 1830. The great age of poetry was dead; but it had not been crowded out by new and more vigorous movements, for no such poetical movements had appeared. It expired in a vacuum.



## CHAPTER XII

### *Forty Years of Satire, Parody, and Burlesque*

It has often been declared that the early eighteenth century was the reign of satire and the mock-heroic; the early nineteenth that of serious poetry. The statement is far from being wholly wrong; yet it threatens to become what Tennyson called the blackest of lies, a lie that is half a truth. There was a great deal of satire, parody, or burlesque during the early nineteenth century. As a whole it was less brilliant than that of Queen Anne's day, and much better natured; it forms a smaller portion of the literary total; but as a factor in the literary life of the times it was much more important than anthologies would indicate. In the outlying districts, those rural nurseries of the great new poetry, there was less of it; but it thrived still around the big cities, and especially London. In verse it gradually evolved from the early couplet into new forms; and for that reason much which has already been included in the chapter on the Pope tradition might be given here. At times such poetry represents the hostility of one literary camp for another or the more righteous hostility of good literature for bad; at times mere love of fun; and often the effort of new literary schools to put brakes on their own over enthusiastic speeding. A brief survey of it may take the place of a summary for our book, both before and after the fall of Napoleon, reviewing the literature of the romantic generation from a new angle of vision.

The first great satirist just before and just after 1790 was Burns. He has been justly hailed as the reviver of song, with some justice, perhaps, as the herald of romanticism; but we must not forget the judgment of Swinburne that Burns's greatest rôle was that of the satirist. He ridiculed literature very little; as a half-educated

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countryman he was in no position to see or realize its faults; but his attacks on the religious form the "Hypocritiad" of English poetry. They are to "Tartuffe" as a Scotch broadsword to a Parisian rapier.

Oh Pope, had I thy satire's darts,  
To gie the rascals their deserts,  
I'd rip their rotten, hollow hearts,

is just as truly Burns as the wail of "Highland Mary" or the wild mirth of "Tam O'Shanter."

Poet Willie! poet Willie! gie the Doctor a volley,  
Wi' your "Liberty's chain" and your wit,  
O'er Pegasus' side ye ne'er laid a stride,

shows that the Ayrshire lyrist was not so much gentler than the Twick'nam wit in handling the same type of men.

The satire of Cowper we may pass over, as it had neither much effect nor great intrinsic merit; but we should not forget that he wrote it. Gifford's attack on the Della Cruscan school of poetry in his "Baeviad" and "Maeviad"—which was using a tomahawk to crush an addled egg—has already been alluded to, as has also the "Rolliad." In connection with the latter appeared "Probationary Odes for the Laureateship," pretended competitors for the laurel of the recently deceased Whitehead. They are thus weaker fore-runners of the famous "Rejected Addresses," and like them a satirical survey of the poetical tendencies of the hour. Gray's opening lines in "The Progress of Poesy" and "The Bard" are burlesqued, as well as the "Il Penseroso" school:

Hence, loath'd Monopoly,  
Of Av'rice foul, and Navigation bred, . . .  
But come, thou goddess, fair and free,  
Hibernian reciprocity.

The "Song of Scrutina, by Mr. Macpherson" is a thrust at Pitt as well as at the author of "Ossian." "Leave not Pitto in the day of defeat, when the Chiefs of the Counties fly from him like the herd from the galled Deer. The friends of Pitto are fled. He is alone—he layeth himself down in despair, and sleep knitteth up his brow.

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Soft were his dreams on the green bench. Lo! the spirit of Jenky arose, pale as the mist of the morn." Then we have "A Full and True Account of the Rev. Thomas Warton's Ascension from Christ Church Meadow, Oxford," in which the learned poet of medievalism can make his balloon rise only by throwing overboard his own all too ponderous works. "I was fain to part with both volumes of my Spenser, and all of my last edition of Poems . . . which very quickly accelerated my ascension."

By 1797 the false dawn of romantic poetry, represented in Macpherson, Warton, Collins, Chatterton, and the later work of Gray, had died out; and new types of poetry with new virtues and defects lay open to attack. *The Anti-Jacobin* was a brilliant and many-sided work, intended to be more political than literary; but its chief interest for us lies in its assaults on Erasmus Darwin's poetry and on popular German melodrama. In both of these it was doing what Pope had done a lifetime earlier, and what Thackeray did much later; for satire and romance, parody and sentiment are the eternal positive and negative poles of humanity, not the exclusive property of any age or literary school. We know of nothing more true and epigrammatic in Swift than *The Anti-Jacobin's* definition of an eighteenth-century didactic poem, "so called from *didaskein*, to teach, and *poema*, a poem; because it teaches nothing, and is not poetical." The "Loves of the Triangles," in a refreshing take-off on Darwin's flirtations between vegetables, pictures the fair Hyperbola:

Quick as her *conjugated* axes move  
Through every posture of luxurious love . . .  
Unveil'd, except in many a filmy ray,  
Where light *Asymptotes* o'er her bosom play.

Of the anti-Teutonic "Rovers," which laughed Kotzebue's chivalry away, mention has been made elsewhere. Another passage from *The Anti-Jacobin* shows a widely prevalent and utterly wrong attitude toward certain literary men, due to their supposed political beliefs. After exalting Lepaux, a very minor French figure, to the fictitious dignity of representing the French Revolution and being brought into England by "Buonaparte's victor fleet," it continues:

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Rejoiced our CLUBS shall greet him, and install  
The holy Hunchback in thy dome, St. Paul!  
While countless votaries, thronging in his train,  
Wave their red caps, and hymn this jocund strain:  
"Couriers and Stars, Sedition's evening host,  
Thou *Morning Chronicle* and *Morning Post*,  
Whether ye make the Rights of Man your theme,  
Your country libel, and your God blaspheme,  
Or dirt on private worth and virtue throw,  
Still blasphemous or blackguard, praise LEPAUX.

And ye five other wandering bards, that move  
In sweet accord of harmony and love,  
COLERIDGE and SOUTHEY, LLOYD, and LAMB and Co.,  
Tune all your mystic harps to praise LEPAUX! . . .

"THELWALL, and ye that lecture as ye go,  
And for your pains get pelted, praise LEPAUX! . . .

"All creeping creatures, venomous and low,  
PAINE, WILLIAMS, GODWIN, HOLCROFT, praise LEPAUX!"

Then there is a barbed dart for the "sweet Sensibility" of the sentimental novel and play, telling how Rousseau

Taught her to cherish still in either eye,  
Of tender tears a plentiful supply.

Meanwhile Ann Radcliffe's novels were on every shelf; and in "Northanger Abbey" Jane Austen's needle did for them what "The Rovers" had done for Kotzebue. As Lydia Languish proposed to enclose "The Innocent Adultery" in "The Whole Duty of Man," so Miss Austen's heroine would include "The Romance of the Forest" among the realities of a well-kept estate. Her favorite reading is "Udolpho," and while on a visit to a friend's house she makes a desperate effort to discover mysterious papers and haunted apartments, with disastrous effect on her faith in Mrs. Radcliffe. "Northanger Abbey" was written in 1803 as an attack on "Udolpho"; it appeared in 1817, when it served almost equally well as a take-off on the novels and dramas of Maturin.

Byron's "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" (1809) is a nineteenth-century "Dunciad."

Fools are my theme, let satire be my song.

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Between twenty and thirty living authors are mentioned in it, a few with praise, most with ridicule. There is Fitzgerald with his "creaking couplets"; George Lambe's condemned farce; Pye, with whom it is worse to shine than "to err with Pope"; "roaring Southey"; "grovelling Stot"; "Marmion's" author, "Apollo's venal son"; "the simple Wordsworth"; "gentle Coleridge,

To turgid ode and tumid stanza dear";

"wonder-working Lewis"; "Hibernian Strangford"; Hayley,

For ever feeble and for ever tame;

"the Sabbath bard, Sepulchral Grahame"; Bowles,

Thou first great oracle of tender souls;

"Boeotian Cottle"; "dull Maurice"; James Montgomery,

With broken lyre and cheek serenely pale;

"Dibdin's nonsense"; "the mummery of the German schools," etc. The poem took well with the public, nothing but Byron's awakened conscience preventing a fifth edition in 1812.

In 1813 George Colman the Younger followed in Byron's wake, though with much less power, in his "Vagaries Vindicated," a satire on reviewers in Pope's couplet. The "Poetic Vagaries" themselves by the same author had appeared one year earlier, and were a collection of burlesque tales in various metres; one of them, "The Lady of the Wreck," being a parody on Scott's just published "Lady of the Lake." William Combe's "Tour of Dr. Syntax" was a Hudibrastic take-off on the descriptive books of William Gilpin. It succeeded wonderfully at the time, had many editions and several sequels, but now calls forth only the well-known comment of Polonius, "This is too long."

In 1812, the same year which produced Colman's and Combe's work, appeared a far greater one, the still enjoyable "Rejected Addresses" of James and Horace Smith. It begins with the assumption that the poets of the day have competed in writing addresses for the opening of Drury Lane Theater, and proceeds to give the rejected MSS. The "Baby's Debut" is fathered upon Wordsworth:

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Well, after many a sad reproach,  
They got into a hackney coach,  
And trotted down the street.  
I saw them go: one horse was blind,  
The tails of both hung down behind,  
Their shoes were on their feet.

It should be noted, as a comment on the public attitude toward Wordsworth, that he is here, unlike most of the other victims, attacked for mannerisms belonging to a much earlier date. The world seemed usually to become acquainted with each one of his poems about a decade after it was published. The melancholy Spenserian stanzas of "Cui Bono" ridiculed, and also delighted, the author of "Childe Harold." They are purposely put into close juxtaposition with lines assigned to the jovial Moore:

O why should our dull retrospective addresses  
Fall damp as wet blankets on Drury Lane Fire?  
Away with blue devils, away with distresses,  
And give the gay spirit to sparkling desire.

"The Rebuilding," by R. S., mimics in metre and other details "The Curse of Kehama" by Southey. The humorous wraith of Scott declares,

My knees are stiff in iron buckles,  
Stiff spikes of steel protect my knuckles.

"Fire and Ale," by M. G. L. (Matt Lewis), is in the easy rolling stanza of "Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogene." "Playhouse Musings," by S. T. C., shows that the public, which had no trouble in forgetting "The Ancient Mariner," had not yet gotten over the immature lines "To a Young Ass" written over fifteen years before.

My pensive Public, wherefore look you sad?  
I had a grandmother, she kept a donkey  
To carry to the mart her crockery ware,  
And when that donkey looked me in the face,  
His face was sad! and you are sad, my Public!

There are also parodies on the "hoarse Fitzgerald" of Byron, W. R. Spencer, Crabbe, and others. The Smiths tried the same playful



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vein, though not quite as brilliantly, with "Horace in London" the following year. A sentence from the Preface of this volume shows that the authors were genuine admirers of the poets whom they ridiculed, and were actuated merely by love of fun or by a desire to give an over spirited Pegasus a little friendly grooming: "Had the authors of 'Rejected Addresses' listened to the voice of Prudence, they would have sat silent under the laurels they recently purloined from the brows of their betters, rather than have proved by advancing in propriâ personâ into the Parnassus lists, how much easier a task it is to ridicule good poetry, than to write it."

The same genial spirit animated James Hogg's "Poetic Mirror" (1816). One of the best proofs of this is that he, like Southey and Matt Lewis earlier, parodies himself. He had intended editing a collection of serious verse by his various fellow poets; but when that failed to materialize he fell back on a sheaf of good-natured parodies wholly from his own pen. "Childe Harold" is burlesqued in "The Guerilla," and the rhyming epistles in "Marmion" call out the "Epistle to Mr. R. S.," Melrose, Teviotdale, August 3. One of the worst blind spots in the critical eye of Wordsworth showed itself in his choice of lumbering, discordant titles; and Hogg takes full advantage of this: "The Stranger; being a further portion of The Recluse, a Poem." "The Flying Tailor; being a further extract from The Recluse, a Poem." "James Rigg; another extract from The Recluse, a Poem." "Wat o' the Cleuch" imitates Hogg himself, and "The Curse of the Laureate," Southey. One of the best is "Isabelle," a take-off on the recently published "Christabel."

Sounds the river harsh and loud?  
The stream sounds harsh but not loud.  
There is a cloud that seems to hover,  
By western hill the churchyard over;  
What is it like?—'Tis like a whale;  
'Tis like a shark with half the tail,  
Not half, but third and more;  
Now 'tis a wolf, and now a boar;  
Its face is raised—it cometh here;  
Let it come—there is no fear.

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There's two for heaven, and ten for hell,  
Let it come—'tis well—'tis well!  
Said the Lady Isabelle.

The next year Frere published his Whistlecraft poem, later called "The Monks and the Giants," which launched the Italian movement in poetry and is in itself a burlesque on medieval life and romantic medieval poetry.

Madoc and Marmion, and many more,  
Are out in print, and most of them have sold;

and so Frere proposes to tell the story of King Arthur, whose knights were

prepared, on proper provocation,  
To give the lie, pull noses, stab and kick;  
And for that very reason, it is said,  
They were so very courteous and well-bred.

Frere's poem, unlike that of Hogg, is in his most characteristic vein, that of the genial but quizzical urban wit.

Laughter and tears do not lie nearer together than sympathy and ridicule may, when one is hitting the absurdities of a great and generous age. Thomas Love Peacock heaped unsparing abuse on many of his contemporaries, including his devoted friend Shelley; but one feels most of the time that whom Peacock loveth he chasteneth. His early poetry is as serious as the dead, and like them need not be irreverently disturbed. He fell into his true vein in 1814 with "Sir Proteus," "a satirical ballad" though not a great one, ridiculing Wordsworth, Coleridge, and John Wilson. His fame rests on his prose narratives, written in a tone of friendly banter toward his age. Four of them appeared between 1816 and 1822, and two more in 1829 and 1831 respectively. At times Peacock becomes a Thackeray or masculine Jane Austen. In "Headlong Hall," Miss Cephalis Cranium "flew to the arms of her dear friend Caprioletta, with all that warmth of friendship which young ladies usually assume toward each other in the presence of young gentlemen." At times the author uses the microscope of Swift, only he holds it

before an amused instead of a jaundiced eye. Mr. Cranium in his lecture on phrenology says very incidentally: "Here is the skull of a Newfoundland dog. You observe the organ of benevolence, and that of attachment. Here is a human skull, in which you may observe a very striking negation of both these organs; and an equally striking development of those of destruction, cunning, avarice, and self-love. This was one of the most illustrious statesmen that ever flourished in the page of history." "Mr. Dross," as we are told in "Melincourt," "was a tun of a man, with the soul of a hazel-nut: his wife was a tun of a woman, without any soul whatever. The principle that animated her bulk was composed of three ingredients—arrogance, ignorance, and the pride of money. They were, in every sense of the word, what the world calls respectable people."

Peacock felt at once the charm of what was best in medieval romance and the absurdity of its extremes. Both moods appear in the opening of "Melincourt." "Melincourt Castle had been a place of considerable strength in those golden days of feudal and royal prerogative, when no man was safe in his own house unless he adopted every possible precaution for shutting out all his neighbors. . . . An impetuous torrent boiled through the depth of the chasm, and after eddying round the base of the castle rock, which it almost insulated, disappeared in the obscurity of a woody glen, whose mysterious recesses, by popular superstition formerly consecrated to the devil, are now fearlessly explored by the solitary angler, or laid open to view by the more profane hand of the picturesque tourist." We are told that "the turrets and battlements were abandoned to the owl and the ivy"; and the traditional ruined wing is reported as peopled with ghosts, despite the incantations of the Rev. Mr. Portpipe, "who often passed the night in one of the dreaded apartments over a blazing fire with the same invariable exorcising apparatus of a large venison pasty, a little Prayer-book, and three bottles of Madeira." The rest of the castle was still inhabited; "and while one half of the edifice was fast improving into a picturesque ruin, the other was as rapidly degenerating, in its interior at least, into a comfortable modern dwelling."

Miss Danaretta Pinmoney, a young lady very romantic in literary,



and very hardheaded in matrimonial matters, cries out regarding the heiress of Melincourt: "Nay, I think there is something delightfully romantic in Anthelia's mode of life; but I confess I should like now and then, peeping through the ivy of the battlements, to observe a *preux chevalier* exerting all his eloquence to persuade the inflexible porter to open the castle gates, and allow him one opportunity of throwing himself at the feet of the divine lady of the castle, for whom he had been seven years dying a lingering death." Incidentally the *preux chevalier* would have had more chance with Miss Danaretta if he had been seven years in the banking business.

Lord Monboddo's pioneer work in anthropology, Rousseau's return to Nature, and political corruption in England, are all hit at once in Sir Oran Haut-ton. He is an orang-outang, a model of silent good breeding, who by education becomes a perfect gentleman, a rescuer of abducted ladies, a baronet and M. P. for the borough of One-Vote. Ballad collectors and imitators are ridiculed in the person of Mr. Derrydown. "One day, in a listless mood, taking down a volume of 'The Reliques of Ancient Poetry,' he found, or fancied he found, in the plain language of the old English ballad, glimpses of the truth of things, which he had vainly sought in the vast volumes of philosophical disquisition." As a result, he "passed the greater part of every year in posting about the country, for the purpose, as he expressed it, of studying together poetry and the peasantry, unsophisticated nature and the truth of things."

"Nightmare Abbey" offers a curious contrast to Jane Austen's "Northanger Abbey." Peacock has more masculine violence in the thrust of his rapier yet more imaginative sympathy with the very atmosphere the excess of which he ridicules. The melancholy of Ossian and Werther, Gothic ruins, and heroines in disguise, are held up as the amiable absurdities of youth. The hero, Scythrop, is Peacock's friend Shelley, not the mature poet of the Italian days, but the young disciple of Ann Radcliffe. "Here would Scythrop take his evening seat, on a fallen fragment of mossy stone, with his back resting against the ruined wall,—a thick canopy of ivy, with an owl in it, over his head,—and the 'Sorrows of Werter' in his hand. He had some taste for romance reading before he went to the Uni-

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versity, where, we must confess, in justice to his college, he was cured of the love of reading in all its shapes." At the end of the story, Scythrop, who has made love to two young ladies and lost them both, orders a pint of port and a pistol, saying, "I will make my exit like Werter." But he soon changes the order for a boiled fowl and Madeira.

Mr. Cypress is Byron, whose made-to-order melancholy was a universal subject of parody, and is here deftly held up as an unreasonable though not ridiculous mood in the well-known song:

There is a fever of the spirit,  
The brand of Cain's unresting doom.

Southey,—whose supposed time-serving tendencies had already been attacked in the poet Mr. Feathernest of "Melincourt,"—appears again as Mr. Sackbut.

Peacock had no great reverence for "that egregious confraternity of rhymesters, known by the name of the Lake Poets"; and his favorite victim was Coleridge. He appears in "Melincourt" as Mr. Mystic of Cimmerian Lodge, where

The fog was here, the fog was there,  
The fog was all around.

"'I divide my day,' said Mr. Mystic, '*on a new principle*: I am always poetical at breakfast, moral at luncheon, metaphysical at dinner, and political at tea.'" The second incarnation of Coleridge is as Mr. Flosky in "Nightmare Abbey." "Mystery was his mental element. He lived in the midst of that visionary world in which nothing is but what is not. He dreamed with his eyes open, and saw ghosts dancing round him at noontide." He declares that "mystery is the very key-stone of all that is beautiful in poetry, all that is sacred in faith, and all that is recondite in transcendental psychology. I am writing a ballad which is all mystery." And we are told that the Rev. Mr. Larynx would "lament the good old times of feudal darkness with the transcendental Mr. Flosky."

It is true, of course, that in "The Rejected Addresses," in Hogg, and in Peacock, one finds mere fun or a friendly corrective rather

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than the envenomed satire of Pope and Swift. It is also true that some of the same kindliness appeared in Queen Anne's time in Prior, Gay, and Addison. If we wish for a satirist not quite as gloomy and bitter as "Gulliver," but often of similar temper, we can find him in the later Byron. Like Swift he had once moved in brilliant society in England, though, it is true, in a more commanding position. Like Swift he had been driven into an exile more voluntary but far from happy. His relations with women, enough unlike in many ways, had this in common with those of Swift that for both the end had been bitterness. The Byron of "Don Juan," it is true, has by no means lost faith in *all* humanity. There is genuine pathos in Julia's letter:

Men have all these resources, we but one,  
To love again, and be again undone.

This becomes doubly intense at the death of the really innocent Haidée. The rough soldiers at Ismail honor Juan for saving a little girl in the charge. The robber who assaults Juan on his arrival in England dies bequeathing a keepsake to "Sal." Even in conventional English society, the author's pet aversion, there is Aurora Raby,

sincere, austere,  
As far as her own gentle heart allow'd.

But in general, Byron the rake like Augustine the saint seemed to believe that ninety-nine one-hundredths of humanity should be damned.

And the sad truth which hovers o'er my desk  
Turns what was once romantic to burlesque.  
And if I laugh at any mortal thing,  
'Tis that I may not weep.

He may still have admired the beauty, but he had certainly learned the practical inadequacy of that idealism voiced by George Sand: "Since when has it been obligatory for the novel to be a transcription of what is, of the hard and cold reality of contemporary men and things. . . . What I should like to write is the human pastoral,



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the human ballad, the human romance. . . . I . . . feel impelled to paint him [man] as I wish him to be, as I believe he ought to be." Don Juan answers:

But now I'm going to be immoral; now  
I mean to show things really as they are,  
Not as they ought to be: for I avow,  
That till we see what's what in fact, we're far  
From much improvement.

The satire on bad poetry has the temper, though not the style, of  
"The Dunciad." Southey at the gate of heaven

ceased, and drew forth an MSS.; and no  
Persuasion on the part of devils, or saints,  
Or angels, now could stop the torrent;

and as he recites

The angels stopp'd their ears and plied their pinions;  
The devils ran howling, deafen'd, down to hell.

"Wordsworth's last quarto" is

A drowsy frowzy poem, call'd the "Excursion,"  
Writ in a manner which is my aversion.

Then we have a hit in the opposite direction at

Aristotle's rules,  
The *Vade Mecum* of the true sublime,  
Which makes so many poets, and some fools.

Byron follows the "Voyage to Laputa" in his attack on impractical education. Donna Inez taught Juan

The languages, especially the dead,  
The sciences, and most of all the abstruse,  
The arts, at least all such as could be said  
To be the most remote from common use.

Byron's picture of war is not so pessimistic as that given by Gulliver to the Brobdingnagian king, for Byron was a born fighter and felt that the game was often worth the candle; but the sordidness,

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brutality, and horror he draws with an equally unflinching hand.  
Suwarrow, the great military hero of Russia, is

Hero, buffoon, half-demon, and half-dirt,  
Praying, instructing, desolating, plundering.

The dazzling conqueror

Turns out to be a butcher in great business,  
Afflicting young folks with a sort of dizziness;

and as for the private, fame and

Half-pay for life, make mankind worth destroying.

It is the probe of "Lilliput" that Byron applies to courts and diplomacy:

Now back to thy great joys, Civilization!  
And the sweet consequence of large society,  
War, pestilence, the despot's desolation,  
The kingly scourge, the lust of notoriety,  
The millions slain by soldiers for their ration,  
The scenes like Catherine's boudoir at threescore,  
With Ismail's storm to soften it the more.

He sees

What Anthropophagi are nine of ten  
Of those who hold the kingdoms in control.

Juan's diplomatic business between Russia and England is

Maintain'd with all the due prevarication  
With which great states such things are apt to push on.

His English friend, Lord Henry

was a great debater,  
So that few members kept the house up later.

Among the many portraits of corruptible peers at Norman Abbey,

here and there some stern high patriot stood,  
*Who could not get the place for which he sued.*

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If there are times when poetic glamour is thrown around sex passion in a manner unknown to Swift, there are others that strip it away as remorselessly as the hand that drew the Yahoo. Gulbayez, Catherine II, and the Duchess Fitz-Fulke all demonstrate that

love is vanity,  
Selfish in its beginning as its end,  
Except where 'tis a mere insanity.

Though Byron's "desultory rhyme" with its "conversational facility" is unlike enough the barbed epigrams of Queen Anne, he can, when he wishes, be pithy and poisonous as they. If a faithless sultana had been drowned in a sack,

Morals were better, and the fish no worse.

Though Ireland starve, great George weighs twenty stone.

Pitt, the incorruptible,

as a high-soul'd minister of state is  
Renown'd for ruining Great Britain gratis.

Whether Byron as a poet be greater in the romantic or the satiric vein, as a thinker he stands immeasurably higher in the latter rôle. Goethe declared him a child when he reflected, from which moderately true criticism there has been drawn a false corollary that Byron's poems lack intellectual weight. On the contrary, the chief appeal of "Don Juan" is to the intellect. Reflection is only one side of mental activity; observation is the other; and Byron was a keener, more penetrating observer than any other poet of his age. In "Don Juan" he amassed materials to keep a hundred philosophers thinking. He never asks himself, like Shakespeare, Browning, and George Eliot, *why* people act as they do; but he is always asking precisely how they *do* act. He has the eye of a hawk for every inconsistency, for every departure from a poet's imaginary norm. He equals Homer,

If not in poetry, at least in fact;  
And fact is truth, the grand desideratum!

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Besides, my Muse by no means deals in fiction:

She gathers a repertory of facts,

he tells us. Erratic thinker though he was, he was a pioneer for modern realists, of the type which he himself describes:

'Tis strange,—but true; for truth is always strange;

Stranger than fiction; if it could be told,

How much would novels gain by the exchange!

How differently the world would men behold!

How oft would vice and virtue places change!

The new world would be nothing to the old,

If some Columbus of the moral seas

Would show mankind their souls' antipodes.

Life had trained him for such a task as it had trained no other of his contemporaries.

Talk not of seventy years as age; in seven

I have seen more changes, down from monarchs to

The humblest individual under heaven,

Than might suffice a moderate century through.

Byron has so much of mockery and pose that one dare not always believe him; but, if we can trust the closing lines of "The Dream," the mood of his last years had all too much in common with that of St. Patrick's embittered dean:

but the wise

Have a far deeper madness, and the glance

Of melancholy is a fearful gift:

What is it but the telescope of truth,

Which strips the distance of its fantasies,

And brings life near in utter nakedness,

Making the cold reality too real?

Both had studied the dark side of life to the exclusion of the bright one; but both had examined their field with "the telescope of truth," and had made profound discoveries in detail, even if they pictured utter falsehood in general proportions. Their greatness came, not from imagination or reflection, but from observation and experience. The only language which could truly express what they had found was satire.

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Byron—he said it himself—wrote as the tiger leaps. Turning from “Don Juan” to the satires and parodies of Tom Hood, or his collaborator Reynolds, is like turning from the spring of a tiger to the gambols of a kitten. Reynolds’s “Peter Bell, a Lyrical Ballad,” just barely anticipated in print the poem of Wordsworth which it parodied, a poem which later moved to burlesque even the serious-minded Shelley. Hood has his good-natured though hardly friendly hit at Southey,

Mounted on Pegasus—would he were thrown!  
He’ll wear that ancient hackney to the bone.

His “Ode to the Great Unknown” handles the Waverley novels with facetious irreverence, though with outspoken admiration. The end of his “Stag-Eyed Lady” parodies the conclusion of Moore’s “Fire-worshippers”; and his “Irish Schoolmaster” revives the mock-grandiloquent Spenserian stanza of the mid-eighteenth century. “Mary’s Ghost” is a laughing echo of “Sweet William’s Ghost,” “The Wife of Usher’s Well,” and other folk poetry. The popular vogue of Moore is pictured amusingly in “The Wee Man.” In the “Ode to Mr. Graham” Hood looks down from Fancy’s aerial car on the literary world of London and realizes its true pigmy nature in playfully satiric vein.

What’s Rogers here? Who cares for Moore!

Come:—what d’ye think of Jeffrey, sir?  
Is Gifford such a Gulliver  
In Lilliput’s Review?

Now say—Is Blackwood’s *low* or not?

Now,—like you Croly’s verse indeed?

And, truly, is there such a spell  
In those three letters, L. E. L.,  
To witch a world with song?  
On clouds the Byron did not sit,  
Yet dared on Shakespeare’s head to spit,  
And say the world was wrong.

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Campbell—(you cannot see him here)—  
Hath scorn'd my *lays*:—do his appear  
Such great eggs from the sky?

All this was before 1828. Many years later in "Love and Lunacy" Hood burlesqued the moon-worshipping romantic heroine in Ellen, who almost lost her Lorenzo because, being short-sighted, she mistook the new illuminated clock for the poetic luminary. In the same volume "There's No Romance in That" rings the merry knell of the sentimental medieval vogue in literature:

O days of old, O days of Knights,  
Of tourneys and of tilts,  
When love was balk'd and valour stalk'd  
On high heroic stilts! . . .  
I wish I ne'er had learn'd to read,  
Or Radcliffe how to write;  
That Scott had been a boor on Tweed,  
And Lewis cloister'd quite!  
Would I had never drunk so deep  
Of dear Miss Porter's vat;  
I only turn to life, and weep—  
There's no Romance in that! . . .  
On Tuesday, reverend Mr. Mace  
Will make me Mrs. Pratt,  
Of Number Twenty, Sussex Place—  
There's no Romance in that.

Hood and Reynolds were romantic poets who liked fun at a friend's expense. Praed was essentially a modern Prior. He could not have written the luxurious "Garden of Florence" or the mysteriously impressive "Haunted House." His best work in society verse lies on the border both of our present subject and of our period, and may be better discussed by others. Nevertheless mention should be made here of his medieval verse narratives, which form about one-fourth of his poetry, and were mainly written during the decade following 1820. At times they are wholly burlesque, at others half burlesque and half serious, suggesting a mental attitude not



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unlike that of Peacock. Medieval Germany, the times of King Arthur, and of Coeur de Lion are all laid under contribution.

Sir Isumbras was ever found  
Where blows were struck for glory;  
There sat not at the Table Round  
A knight more famed in story.  
The king on his throne would turn about  
To see his courser prancing;  
And, when Sir Launcelot had gout,  
The queen would praise his dancing.  
He quite wore out his father's spurs,  
Performing valor's duties—  
Destroying mighty sorcerers,  
Avenging injured beauties. . . .  
And minstrels came and sang his fame  
In very rugged verses;  
And they were paid with wine and game,  
And rings, and cups, and purses.

The tone here reminds one of Frere's "The Monks and the Giants," and is the product of a similar environment. Praed, like Frere, moved in the best society, and, though not a Londoner, lived in the London region. The same laughing consciousness of life's unromantic realities gives savor to "The Legend of the Teufel Haus." Sir Rudolf, like King Arthur in "The Bridal of Triermain," blows a trumpet at the gate of an ancient castle; but—alas! for the romantic reader—when the white-robed seneschal comes out in answer,

He stayed not to ask of what degree  
So fair and famished a knight might be;  
But knowing that all untimely question  
Ruffles the temper, and mars the digestion,  
He laid his hand upon the crupper,  
And said,—“You're just in time for supper.”

The satires and burlesques of Peacock, Praed, and Hood lead one well beyond 1830; and by the time that they were ready to lay their mantle down the shoulders of Thackeray were ready to receive

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it. The technical medium through which satire is uttered changes continually; but the spirit of it is ever with us; and the amount, the brilliance, the venom of it varies with the extent of those contemporary follies which evoke it, depends on them fully as much as on the critical theories of the day.

**PART III**  
**GENERAL DISCUSSIONS**





## CHAPTER XIII

### *Romanticism, Classicism, and Realism*

OF making many definitions there is no end; and now that the elusive sunbeam has been resolved into the colors of the spectrum, perhaps the yet more elusive glory of poetry may be similarly analyzed. To date, however, we cannot feel that this task has been very successfully done; and our own handling of the problem aims at a modest discussion rather than a final settlement. Professor Beers has mapped out valid boundaries for one type of literature, the medieval-romantic. Equally valid boundaries could be fixed for a certain type of harsh realism, including the poems of Crabbe and various novels of his day. It is comparatively easy to separate from their fellows certain poems on Greek subjects handled in a lofty, self-contained spirit, and call them classical; such poems as Wordsworth's "Laodamia," Keats's "Hyperion," and Landor's "Hellenics." Unfortunately these classifications, however valid in themselves, leave the major part of early nineteenth-century literature unaccounted for. Moreover they represent certain traditional paths of thought to which many great poets turned occasionally, but which very few follow consistently; so that, except in such writers as Crabbe, Scott, and Landor, their presence can hardly be considered proof of a romantic, realistic, or classic temperament.

How did the "romantic generation" itself define romantic poetry? The answer to this question, however pertinent, is far from satisfactory. The phrase was often used to voice an impressionistic criticism of some particular work, much more rarely to describe any literary type; for both uses definitions were few, conflicting, and never generally accepted. Among border antiquaries the "romantic ballad" was one handling unreal and often supernatural material

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from the past. It was a similar conception, apparently, which Tom Warton had in mind in the middle of the eighteenth century, when he wrote:

Some more romantic scene might please;  
Or fairy bank, or magic lawn,  
By Spenser's lavish pencil drawn:  
Or bower in Vallambrosa's shade,  
By legendary pens pourtrayed.

With a similar attitude, Coleridge in "Biographia Literaria" practically defined his own share of the "Lyrical Ballads" as romantic and Wordsworth's part as realistic. His own poems were to deal with "persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic." Wordsworth, "on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day," and direct his reader's mind "to the loveliness and wonders of the world before us." Such was the conception of "romantic ballad" followed by Scott in 1802 and by Motherwell in 1827. This definition was fairly clean-cut and was used consistently by a dozen writers; but it applied mainly to literature handed down from the past, and frequently was not accepted by those same authors for contemporary verse.

In 1805 John Foster, a one time somewhat prominent essayist, published a monograph "On the Application of the Epithet Romantic." He discusses the word mainly as applied to human character, wherein "it imputes, in substance, a great excess of imagination in proportion to judgment; and it imputes, in particulars, such errors as naturally result from that excess." Something is said about the use of the term for medieval romances but almost nothing about its application to contemporary literature. One passage, however, would fit excellently the poetry of Blake, which Foster could hardly have known, or that of Shelley, which was not yet written. In the case of the romantic person, we are told, "the whole mind may become at length something like a hemisphere of cloud scenery, filled with an ever-moving train of changing, melting forms, of every color, mingled with rainbows, meteors, and an occasional gleam of



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pure sunlight, all vanishing away, the mental like this natural imagery, when its hour is up, without leaving anything behind but the wish to recover the vision. And yet, the while, this series of visions may be mistaken for operations of thought, and each cloudy image be admitted in the place of a proposition or a reason; or it may even be mistaken for something sublimer than thinking."

In 1813 Scott and Erskine, in the Introduction to "The Bridal of Triermain," gave their definition of romantic poetry, "the popularity of which has been revived in the present day, under the auspices, and by the unparalleled success, of one individual." "According to the author's idea of Romantic Poetry, as distinguished from Epic, the former comprehends a fictitious narrative, framed and combined at the pleasure of the writer; beginning and ending as he may judge best; which neither exacts nor refuses the use of supernatural machinery; which is free from the technical rules of the *Epée*; and is subject only to those which good sense, good taste, and good morals apply to every species of poetry without exception. The date may be in a remote age, or in the present; the story may detail the adventures of a prince or of a peasant. In a word, the author is absolute master of his country and its inhabitants, and everything is permitted to him, excepting to be heavy or prosaic, for which, free and unembarrassed as he is, he has no manner of apology." Two facts are to be noticed about this definition: it is practically that of the French critics, "romanticism is merely liberalism in literature"; and it is meant to apply only to long narrative poems. Scott, apparently, had not thought of Wordsworth's lyrics as either romantic or unromantic.

In 1814 the "De L'Allemagne" of Madame de Staël, publication of which in France had been forbidden by Napoleon's censor, was printed in England in both French and English versions. The gifted authoress, that "whirlwind in petticoats," was at the time a lioness in English literary society; and her work is a part of English, as well as of French, literary history. Her book contained a chapter entitled "Of Classic and Romantic Poetry," derived mainly from her German trip and association with the Schlegels. It opens with an explanation of the new term: "The word *romantic* has been

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lately introduced in Germany to designate that kind of poetry which is derived from the songs of the Troubadours; that which owes its birth to the union of Chivalry and Christianity." Classic poetry is defined as "that of the ancients, and romantic, or *romanesque* poetry, as that which is generally connected with the traditions of chivalry," a definition which was practically equivalent to that of Heine, and which fitted a larger segment of the German Romantic Movement than of the English.

After the fall of Napoleon much foreign criticism percolated into English thought. In 1816 Hazlitt reviewed in *The Edinburgh* a translation of A. W. Schlegel's lectures, and adopted as his own certain definitions of the great German critic. In the words of Hazlitt, "the most obvious distinction between the two styles, the classical and the romantic, is, that the one is conversant with objects that are grand or beautiful in themselves, or in consequence of obvious and universal associations; the other, with those that are interesting only by the force of circumstances and imagination. A Grecian temple, for instance, is a classical object: it is beautiful in itself, and excites immediate admiration. But the ruins of a Gothic castle have no beauty or symmetry to attract the eye; and yet they excite a more powerful and romantic interest from the ideas with which they are habitually associated. If, in addition to this, we are told that this is Macbeth's castle, the scene of the murder of Duncan, the interest will be instantly heightened to a sort of pleasing horror." The definition of romanticism as the poetry of associations has this advantage, that it would include at once Wordsworth's "Thorn," the "Cadyow Castle" of Scott, and Blake's lines on a thistle:

With my inward eye 'tis an Old Man gray;  
With my outward a Thistle across my way.

Another closely overlapping definition of Schlegel was adopted almost in his words by Coleridge two years later in "Characteristics of Shakespeare's Dramas," where we are told that the literary productions of the ancient Greeks were "statuesque, whilst those of the moderns are picturesque." Yet the conception of Schlegel,



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though approved by Hazlitt and Coleridge, does not seem to have been generally adopted or even widely discussed in England, nor was that of de Staël's "De L'Allemagne."

If the commonly used word "romantic" was so ill understood, is it any wonder that the much rarer adjective "classic" was used with equal indefiniteness? Schlegel had pointed out the great difference between ancient Greek poetry and the neo-classic writings of Pope and Racine. Leigh Hunt and others, whether independently or as Schlegel's disciples, had done the same. But although they saw what Greek literature was not, they were only beginning to see what it was; and here also their passing attempts at definition are like the footmarks of one groping in a fog.

As to realism, the romantic generation did not feel with anything like the intenseness of our own age a cleavage between that and romanticism. Rather they felt that reality was often the essence of romanticism. "I have some idea," wrote Byron, "of expectorating a romance, or rather a tale in prose,—but what romance could equal the events—

quae ipse . . . vidi,  
Et quorum pars magna fui?"

This was in 1813. A decade later in "Don Juan" he declared:

truth is always strange,  
Stranger than fiction.

About the same time Hazlitt said in "Table Talk": "This is the test and triumph of originality, not to shew us what has never been, and what we may therefore very easily never have dreamt of, but to point out to us what is before our eyes and under our feet, though we have had no suspicion of its existence, for want of sufficient strength of intuition, of determined grasp of mind to seize and retain it. Rembrandt's conquests were not over the *ideal*, but the *real*." In 1830 Lamb wrote to Bernard Barton: "A careful observer of life, Bernard, has no need to invent. Nature romances it for him." On the mingling of seeming realism and romanticism in Wordsworth and the Scotch writers there is no need of dwelling.



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✓ The romantic generation was much more definite in marking the distinction between itself and the age of Pope. The phrase "romantic school" was almost unknown, that of "romantic poetry," besides being rather rare, was vaguely and inconsistently defined; but the labels "new school" and "new poetry" were applied often and pretty consistently in the prose of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Hunt. The "new school" consisted of the "Lakers" and the "suburban" poets. Yet the chief marks of the "new poetry" in the eyes of its members were only in part those which are usually associated with "romanticism," comprising merely the return to natural scenery and homely truth, the simplification of poetic language, and, to a less extent, the revival of the Greek spirit. The wild witchery of "Christabel," the

elfin storm from fairyland

in "The Eve of Saint Agnes," are tacitly passed over as incidentally connected with the new tendency, not typical of its principal aims. Scott and Byron were neither included in the "new school" nor definitely assigned to the old. At bottom the reforms on which the "new school" of poets insisted were less distinctions between literary types than between good and bad poetry in general. Their main object of hostility was not Pope, whom they read and even admired more than most people to-day, but the decadent Pope imitators of the late eighteenth century. In a sense the age of enthusiasm was reacting through them against the age of reason; but four decades of sentimentalized literature lay between the two ages as a buffer kingdom and deadened the shock. The main reaction was against the senile old age of literary traditions which in the days of Dryden had been young and vigorous. Lamb, Hazlitt, and Hunt often admired the Augustans, but would probably have said with Tennyson:

The old order changeth, giving place to new,  
Lest one *good* custom should corrupt the world.

✓ If the critics of the period give so little help in forming definitions, can anything further be learned from the popular taste of

the time? In some ways, very little. If by the romantic generation is meant the reading public, not the little lonely groups of unappreciated geniuses, then an attempt to define the nature of its preferences would be like an attempt to photograph the changing old man of the sea. Hazlitt condemned the spirit of the age for "its love of paradox and change, its dastard submission to prejudice and to the fashion of the day." In 1828 Carlyle spoke of the preceding half-century as "fifty years of the wildest vicissitudes in poetic taste." The most consistent feature of literary feeling in the public was its indifference to those authors who are usually called the greatest "romantic" poets: Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley. If its *dicta* have any value whatever, they would place the above-mentioned men in a different literary category from those who pleased where they offended, from Byron and Moore, and from Scott, with whom, more than with any one else, the adjective "romantic" was associated during his lifetime.

Early nineteenth-century comment on the nature of romanticism is only slightly more instructive than the remarks of King Leodogran's chamberlain. The scholarly verdicts of more recent years demand greater respect, but leave one with very indefinite conclusions. The German literary historians, beginning with Heine and de Staël, have emphasized more than others in their conception of romanticism the revival of the Middle Ages, because that revival played a much larger part in the literature of the "romantische Schule" than in that of French and British contemporaries. The disciples and forerunners of Victor Hugo collided with an intellectual despotism in poetry to which there was nothing comparable in Great Britain and Germany; so naturally the French critics, from Hugo to our own day, have emphasized liberalism in literature as the dominant note of romanticism. In England, definitions, like the phenomena which they were intended to define, have been more vague and various. The medieval movement formed only a part of the whole. In general, critics who tried to grasp the entire age under one formula have laid emphasis on the "return to nature" or the "renascence of wonder." Although nobody will deny the fact that these definitions vaguely shadow forth something which really



took place, yet an attempt to apply them in detail shows that they often become meaningless and often misleading.

Can the problem not be viewed from another angle, with less emphasis on the poem as a finished work of art and more on the forces which produced it? A literary movement is made up of individual literary men moving in certain directions. How would any one of those individuals be reacting if we could study his mind in the working? For example, what were the more significant and definable forces working on the brain of Keats while he was writing "The Eve of Saint Agnes," and are there not four which stand out beyond the others?

In the first place there is the social influence of the literary group with which the poet happens at that time to be affiliated. The frequent beauty and occasional unmanliness of the "Cockneys" appear in line after line. In the second place there is the inborn personality of the individual poet, accentuated and developed by such early surroundings as have tended to make him *unlike* his fellows. "The Eve of Saint Agnes" is full of touches that could have come from no other poet in English literature, notes peculiar to the timbre of the instrument, to the individual outlook of the soul. Thirdly, beyond his own personality and beyond his own little circle, every poet feels the all-pervading spirit of his age, the literary Zeitgeist. The weak minor drives before its breath like a derelict, to meet shipwreck on some contemporary fad. The great author, charting his course in the light of a deeper vision, now scuds with all sails before that contemporary blast, now tacks laboriously against it, but never can sail for long as if it were not there. It is his task, as it is the task of every intellectual leader, to make the most that he can out of the vast blind forces among which his time has thrown him; to curb their peculiar faults even if he first becomes the arch-sinner in learning how to curb them; and to develop their peculiar virtues. Though Keats was perhaps less a creature of his age than any of his contemporaries, Professor Elton has truly said that "he could hardly have lived at any other epoch and written as he did." And, fourthly, there is the influence of the literary tradition which the poet follows, in this instance the tradi-



tion of Spenser, which a hundred major or minor poets had followed before him, and which a hundred have followed since. The great poet in his chamber finishes the last magazine article on contemporary thought, and lays that and the present on his shelf together. He takes down Spenser or Beaumont, and for him antiquity grows modern. The spirits of the old masters cannot be laid; and if their dead bones are continually being exhumed by pedants and poetasters, their living souls continually revisit the glimpses of the moon in the best of new poetry.

Of the influence of literary groups we have already said enough. Concerning that rare individuality which is each poet's peculiar birthright much might be said, were there any one on earth wise enough to say it. But though the imagination loves to dwell on this theme of poetic psychology, the reason shrinks from writing a learned monograph about it; would fain let that field remain for the present a beautiful *terra incognita*, not yet invaded by methodical research.

The successive *Zeitgeists* and various literary traditions offer a more legitimate field for systematic analysis. They run across each other, lengthwise and breadthwise of time, like the warp and woof of a tapestry, across which the complex embroidery of literary movements is woven. The *Zeitgeist* in Pope's day was that of the age of reason, negative, critical, inculcating good taste and chilling emotion. During the life of Gray, the inevitable reaction had produced an emotional *Zeitgeist*, the harvest of which was sentimental novels, lachrymose comedies, poetry that mourned among graveyards or wailed over non-existent kingdoms of Morven. Then came the *Zeitgeist* of the romantic generation, which retained much of this emotional element, but fused with it a growing intellectual activity, the positive intellectual curiosity of the early nineteenth century, as opposed to the negative intellectual criticism of the early eighteenth. That too had its day; and then followed the age of Tennyson, more chastened in its enthusiasms, more mature in its intellectual analysis, more tame and conventional in its ideals.

Across these far-reaching variations in literary attitude, modifying them and being modified by them, run any number of literary

traditions. There is the tradition of Spenser, which can be traced without a break, through a few great poems and innumerable bad ones, from Pope's "Alley" to Tennyson's "Lotus-Eaters." There is the tradition of the neo-classic couplet, which runs from Waller through Pope, and through innumerable Pope imitators, to die on the hands of Moore and Rogers and come to life again in the verse of Austin Dobson. There is the Miltonic tradition, which involves most of the blank verse in the eighteenth century; which is responsible for many a dull epic that should have been entitled "Poetic Inspiration Lost"; which trails across parts of "The Excursion," and resumes some of its ancient glory in "Hyperion." There is the great tradition of medievalism,—at times involved with the Spenserian, but often separate,—which first became prominent with the Wartons and has gone on uninterruptedly ever since, appearing to-day in novels by Maurice Hewlett and poems by Alfred Noyes. There are the traditions of Dante and the Elizabethan drama and the literature of Greece, all negligible in the eighteenth century but prominent and clearly traceable in the nineteenth.

Now, whatever be one's definition of romanticism, it is obvious that differing degrees of that quality will be found in the inherent natures of different poets, in the atmospheres of different social groups, in the dominant influence of different traditions, and in the prevailing spirit of different *Zeitgeists*. When one considers that three or four of these forces act together in the production of almost any great poem, and that they can be combined in varying degrees and in an astonishing number of ways, one grows rather skeptical about dividing the resulting product according to any two or three categories. Let us adopt temporarily a conception of romanticism approximately that of Mr. Arthur Symonds and the late Mr. Watts-Dunton. Then "Christabel" was the product of a romantic soul following a romantic tradition among a mildly romantic group in a romantic age, and comes naturally by its character as one of the most romantic of poems. Pope's "Essay on Criticism," one of the most neo-classic of English masterpieces, was written by a man of neo-classic temperament, following a neo-classic tradition, in a neo-classic age and in an unromantic social environment. But between



these two extreme poles there are any number of transitional stages. The early eighteenth-century Spenserians, whose romantic qualities have been much disputed, followed a romantic tradition in an unromantic age. Most of the poetry of Rogers reveals a neo-classic spirit moving among a partially neo-classic group, writing usually after a neo-classic tradition in a distinctly unAugustan period. "The Excursion" combines some of the virtues of Milton himself and many of the faults of his dull imitators with qualities unknown to both, qualities which are due to Wordsworth's own individuality or to the mental currents of his day. The late eighteenth-century imitators of Pope followed an Augustan tradition in a sentimental period.

The four forces which have seemed the most important to us may not seem so to all, and are obviously not the only ones in the vast complexity of life. They do, however, represent the four lines along which literary historians have mainly studied romanticism. The works of Professor Beers are primarily a study of literary traditions, especially the great medieval tradition, which became unquestionably romantic in the early nineteenth century, doubtfully so later on in Kingsley's "Saint's Tragedy" or Reade's "Cloister and the Hearth," and clothed with the old glamour in still more recent work by Hewlett and William Morris. Arthur Symons's "Romantic Movement" aims primarily at a study of the author's inherent nature. "I have tried to get at one thing only," he says in the Preface, "the poet in his poetry, his poetry in the poet." The nature of the prevailing literary spirit in Wordsworth's day has been the subject of various essays and volumes, which have found the common element of that spirit in the return to nature, the revival of wonder, the love of solitude, or some kindred quality. The present book has attempted to supplement these works by a study of the fourth factor, not because of any exaggerated idea as to its influence, but because it had been least considered.

That the four factors mentioned exist no one will dispute. Are they all among the deep things of poetry or are most of them only surface currents, ripples a few inches deep on an unfathomable sea? Mr. Symons would incline to the latter belief, and says caustically



that "critics or historians of poetry are generally concerned with everything but what is essential in it." At the other extreme one finds critics like Professor Courthope, Brunetière, and the late M. de Gourmont. "Works are to be studied, without too much importance being given to their writers, and we are to be shown how these works give birth to one another by natural necessity; how from the species poetry are born the varieties sonnet and madrigal; how, under the influence of surroundings, the lyrical variety is transformed, without losing its essential characteristics, into eloquence, with many further metamorphoses." Great as are the woes which neutrals must undergo, we cannot honestly take any but a middle ground. We believe with Mr. Symonds that all true poetry is in its deepest essence one and indivisible, that it is the one white ray of light from an eternal sun; but we see that white beam only through the stained glass windows which prejudice and education have built around us, through which it steals in half a hundred differing hues; and we cannot believe that the study of that stained window through which poetry shines discolored on the kneeling soul is as trifling as the study of bygone flounces and furbelows. It may be true that an ideally perfect literary mind would find in all genuine poetry of all ages

The healing of the seamless dress.

But the history of literature, even when dealing with the greatest poets and critics, is not one of ideally perfect literary minds. That the most poetical Englishmen of the eighteenth century should have had their eyes blinded to the grandeur of Dante, that the most poetical sons of France for two hundred years should have had their minds poisoned against Shakespeare,—are such facts beneath a historian's notice? Or take those influences which we have just enumerated. When an enthusiastic boy poet has finished reading "The Faerie Queene," "The Castle of Indolence," "Adonais," and "The Lotus-Eaters," and kindles from their fire, is it so unliterary to attribute to him the emotions which Keats felt on opening Chapman's "Homer," to consider his connection with the Spenserian tradition a notable event? When Wordsworth

declared that his sister gave him eyes and ears for the poetry of the universe, are we necessarily unpoetical in tracing the influence of associates on genius? When Scott declared that he would die if he did not see the heather once a year, did he think that landscape influences meant nothing to a literary soul? And what of the spirit of the age? Is it not the chief mark of a true poet that he tries to find the beautiful, the wonderful, the true in the universe around him? Does not every new age dig up some new treasures of thought and feeling, mixed with a vast mass of new refuse and folly? Is it not his part to grasp the new emotional treasure and winnow it free from its accompanying fads and errors? And is there not often some of this ephemeral error left clinging around his treasure, making posterity misjudge him unless it understands the field in which he had to work? Would it be fair to Congreve if we let foreigners read his plays as the product of a godly age or to "Paradise Lost" if we interpreted it as the product of nineteenth-century philosophy? These external forces exist and go deep into poetry, though there may be other things deeper still. Of the four forces, the poet's inborn nature perhaps is the one most connected with his imperishable work, the other three more often being related to superficial qualities or ephemeral successes. It by no means follows, however, that this field is the most profitable for the literary historian. In such matters the great poet is often his own best interpreter.

Now it may be that all these crossing and mixing threads represent only two kinds of mental fiber, variously disguised; that a wholesale division of literature into two or three categories is still possible. Personally, however, we cannot feel that this is true; nor do we think that our generation feels so. Every one recognizes a certain basic unity, not in all good poetry, perhaps, but in all poetry the goodness of which he really appreciates. Once rise above that into the realm of more superficial divisions, and they become, not twofold nor threefold, but manifold. It is true that in any particular period these many literary characteristics will often be found divided into two camps; but the line of division between the two camps keeps changing from generation to generation. The simple



elements are forever being re-sorted into new combinations; the new group adopts devices from its literary ancestors and from their enemies as well; the individual poet even may become a veritable Proteus, true perhaps to one deity but repeatedly changing his ritual of worship. As the great political parties, the Whigs and Tories, the Republicans and Democrats, under unchanging names have represented ever changing policies, so "Romanticism," "Classicism," and "Realism," even when the differences between them have been clearly felt, have been in a process of continual transmutation. As Macaulay tells us that the Whig and Tory parties exchanged parts, like the man and the serpent in Malebolge, so the "Romanticism" which revolted against eighteenth-century poetic diction has been called to book for its own artificial language by modern realism.

If attempts to pigeonhole the literature of four thousand years and a hundred peoples prove somewhat unconvincing, the task of distinguishing between great literature in the age of Pope and that in the age of Wordsworth is, on the contrary, almost too easy. The distinction is obvious, and already so well known that it needs no further discussion. There remains, however, a fairly important question: Does the great change in the literary product represent a corresponding change in national taste, or does it rather represent a change in the representation of different tastes at the literary parliament? Much might be said for the latter theory. The fathers of Coleridge and the Warton brothers showed markedly un-Augustan tendencies long before their sons blazed the new trail. The nineteenth-century revival began in regions where the eighteenth-century theories had never borne rich harvests. If the age of Pope left us only one type of enduring poetry, it may be less because all poetic spirits thought that way than because incipient poets of other natures were forced into silence, by criticism, by economic pressure, by educational conditions, and by spiritual starvation. Through vast tracts of Great Britain among minds full of latent poetry, the age of Queen Anne made a solitude and called it Taste.

In the early nineteenth century, on the contrary, the general atmosphere encouraged literature of many types. Even those varieties which met with few purchasers and hostile reviews felt



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in the air a breath that gave them life. In no other period of English literature have so many classes, localities, and races at one time been represented by poets of distinction. Their birthplaces and residences dot the islands of Great Britain from end to end and from side to side, in marked contrast with both the Elizabethan and Augustan periods. The natural result was that the spirit of the age was one of complexity and variety, not one of harmony and standardization. The common intellectual element of the age lay in its all-pervading curiosity, not in the directions along which that curiosity worked nor in the literary *credos* with which it might be connected. This curiosity might explore the monuments of the past, the hopes of the future, the riches of a familiar landscape, or the dim vistas and picturesque costumes of remote countries; working along these diverging lines it might produce types of literature differing from each other as much as they all did from Pope; it remained the one mental link which bound the conservative Scott to the revolutionary Shelley, the domestic Wordsworth to the wandering Byron. Emotionally the common bond was in general fulness of emotion rather than in the fact that this emotional richness was always of the same kind. Enthusiasm was considered the mark of inspiration where it had once been the mark of bad taste; but Wordsworth did not share Sir Walter's enthusiasm for border peels, Southey abhorred the revolutionary enthusiasms of Shelley, and Byron was nauseated by the early heart's outpourings of Keats. In the literature of the age the unity—such as one finds—was the unity of poetic fervor, not the supremacy of any one poetic genus.

Much of the confusion about the definitions of "romanticism" is due to the fact that the same word has been used to label a literary type and a literary movement; and the two phenomena, though often related, are fundamentally distinct. When Vesuvius burst into eruption and overwhelmed Pompeii, the eruption was one definite thing; but the chemical constituents of the lava and ashes which it ejected were numerous and varied. Similarly before and after 1800 there was a great literary eruption throughout western Europe. There is no reason why one should not call this the Romantic Movement, if one wishes. But the literature which it poured out

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✓ on an astonished world was not of one type nor two, but of many. Fragments were in it of the old neo-classical peak that the eruption had blown to pieces, dark ash-clouds of Gothic romance, metals from ancient veins unworked for centuries, the flowering turf of humble realism, and wild lavas from the caverns of the mystic far underground. If "romanticism" was a movement it involves a study of many literary types through one short period of their development; if it is a literary type, such as the medieval verse tale, it involves a study of that type reaching across several movements but forming only a small part of each. Either conception is legitimate in itself, but the two fields of study cannot bear the same title without producing confusion. The confusion becomes worse confounded when one tries to overlay these two conceptions with a third, not implied in them, that the products of all movements and of all types can be sorted into two classes, of which one is and the other is not romantic. In this last conception our age shows little faith. Books developing the other two—however we may lament the confusion of terminology—have proved a valuable addition to the history of human thoughts and ideals.

One last question may be thrown out for future thought, though no one at present could give it an adequate answer. What is the relation of either the "romantic" generation or "romantic" traditions to mysticism? There is a half-proved, plausible theory that waves of scientific, realistic thought alternate in man's history with waves of mysticism, periods in which thousands live in a world of their own emotions and visions as the spider in a universe drawn from his own bowels. Unquestionably there was a great deal of mysticism in certain periods of the Middle or Dark Ages and very little in the early eighteenth century. Was the romantic generation a reversion to this attitude? As regards the German *Romantiker* and the unpopular English poets, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Blake and Shelley, it probably was. On the other hand, the popular English writers and the public whom they pleased declared themselves intolerant of this very element. Like the mystic they sought emotional experience; but unlike him they wished to derive it from a world exterior to themselves, from a genuine past, as in the case of

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Scott, from the hard-headed photography of Crabbe, or from observant travel as in the case of Byron. Stray glimpses of another mood may flash across "Childe Harold," but they are only transitory. Among the later pre-Raphaelites the deep mystic feeling of Christina Rossetti is in marked contrast with the cheery bustle of William Morris the man or with the sensuous languor of his verse. Poetry that is usually considered romantic and that betrays occasional gleams of mysticism is combined in Tennyson with enthusiasm for a great scientific age. Wordsworth was at once more mystic and more scientific than Byron.

In general, literary movements do not run exactly parallel to the national thought wave of the time, but vibrate above, below, and around it like overtones in music; and the thought wave itself grows ever more complex with the increasing complexity of life. Both the romantic generation and the medieval tradition have relations to mysticism; but they are not identical with it, and the exact nature of their relationship is hard to grasp. A certain type of medieval mysticism, found in Blake and the German Baader, was one among the many elements hurled up by the great literary eruption; in the case of Wordsworth, Shelley, Christina Rossetti, and Francis Thompson the problem becomes much more involved; and even Blake was much more than a mere revival of Boehme.



## CHAPTER XIV

### *The Survival of the Fittest*

The tumult and the shouting dies,  
The critics and the schools depart;—

and what remains? Not always that which the age had expected to see endure; not always what was most representative of its general temper; not always those works of even the greatest poets on which they had most set their hearts. Is it always even that which most deserved to last? We hope so, but in common honesty we must remember how much conventional cant is implied in that phrase—the verdict of posterity. That survives which is best fitted to endure in an existing, not necessarily in an ideal environment. Moreover posterity, like other supreme tribunals, feels no hesitation in reversing its own decisions, and, contrary to popular belief, is continually doing so. Measured in terms of actual enthusiasm, not of hidebound tradition, the reputations of Aeschylus, Dante, and Milton go waving up and down as well as those of the last magazine favorite, only varying at such high altitudes that they never quite touch oblivion. Nothing is static; nothing is firmly settled; and the great liners as well as the little cock-boats rock up and down on the restless, ever changing hearts of men. It is true that with the passing years we learn more of the facts about each author, the veil of misconception and partial knowledge is removed; but the veil of divergent tastes remains and often grows more impassable as the years put us farther and farther from the dead man's point of view. Our knowledge of facts improves annually as the bibliographies enlarge; but in matters of taste what right have we to consider ourselves so much wiser than a past generation? What is called the verdict of posterity to-day is really in part the verdict of the

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twentieth century and in part the verdict of earlier decades, which the twentieth century has been too lazy to analyze. Is our own age so much more discerning in matters of poetry than the age of Wordsworth,—especially in America? Are college professors to-day more discerning than John Wilson? Are the contributors to *The Dial* and *The Nation* more reliable than Southey, Lamb, and De Quincey? Above all, are our modern poets more sound in their esthetic sense than Coleridge and Keats? There is a certain wisdom which comes from the mellowing influence of time; there is a certain advantage in having a great man appeal from the reading multitude to the judgment of the inner circle; there is a wholesome checking influence which each generation exercises on the vagaries of the others; but at best this verdict of posterity is unreliable enough. Yet, such as it is, we give it, the testimony of one very humble and fallible man as to what many great authors meant to him and apparently to his age.

Are the great writers alone those who should be classed among the permanently valuable? In our opinion, no. Minors are of many kinds, hundreds of whom should be dropped through the sieve of time, but a few retained. There are grave poetasters, such as Hayley, who would bore us if they could, but shall not. There are delightful absurdities of the type of George Dyer, who lives forever in Lamb's gentle ridicule, and never lived in his verses. There are men of commanding intellect in other lines, eighteenth-century doctors and clergymen without number, who have turned out uninspired verses as a cultural by-product. All of these may be profitably left to oblivion. There remains another type whose members the present writer, for one, would not willingly forget, a type not comic but tragic, and appealing through neglected stanzas with all the sincerity of tragedy. Such a man was John Clare, who, without any of the intellectual massiveness which marks a great poet, yet gives one the impression of a remarkably poetical attitude toward life, and makes us find the world sweeter and better because a century ago he pottered here among his meadow flowers. Such a man was Beddoes, the victim of lifelong melancholia, who impresses readers and impressed himself as the broken torso of a giant that

might have been. However imperfect their work, the generations would be poorer without it.

Several such interesting minors can be found in Ireland. In that country there were no literary groups and few traditions; her sons were groping lonely in the darkness; but there was a literary movement. After the sleep, or rather the stupefaction of centuries, the national muse of the Irish began to stir uneasily in her slumber; and the poetry that her children had hitherto produced only in England began to be audible on her own soil. The beginners probably had more poetry in their hearts than they have left us on paper. They broke against an iron barrier, and too often took to drink in despair. Among them was Dermody, who died in 1802, and Callanan one generation later. Their verse is thin and limited in pitch, but with true lyric tears and laughter in it. A more impressive figure, because better balanced, was T. C. Croker. In Scott's description of him, "little as a dwarf, keen-eyed as a hawk, and of easy, prepossessing manners," one finds small kinship with the broken Celtic genius of the Dermody, Maginn, and Mangan type. His prose "Fairy Legends," published in 1825, were translated into German by the Grimm brothers, with whom the author was a friendly correspondent; and several parallels to Croker's Irish tales are found in the continental Märchen of the Grimms. Throughout these "Fairy Legends" and the subsequent "Legends of the Lakes" one revels in Celtic love for the unseen mixed with Celtic irreverence and humor. There are beautiful visions of the land of eternal youth under the Killarney Lakes, grimly grotesque pictures of decapitated fairies tossing their heads about, and wild incidents which the reader may at discretion attribute to either the devil or the black bottle.

In turning to the greater names, one encounters at the start two writers who were almost ciphers to their own age, who had no part in its currents and eddies, no niche in its long reviews, but who have outlived the perishable glory of so many a favorite, and, without a place in earlier chapters, must have an honorable one here. It would be hard to imagine a more isolated figure than William Blake. He offered the public while he was still a young man certain



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noble lyrics which few read, fewer understood, and nobody discussed. He saw Hayley, Bloomfield, Mrs. Hemans, Procter, and "L. E. L." hailed as authors of promise while he was ignored as a nobody. During his creative period as a poet he came in touch with no other great author of his age, with no author of any standing save Hayley. When he was well over fifty and the song was burnt out of him, he crossed for a moment the lives of Lamb, Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, roused a brief spasm of enthusiasm in some of them by his poems, and seems to have dropped promptly out of their minds. Coleridge, who is reported to have sold a thousand copies of Cary's "Dante" by a single lecture, apparently never mentioned Blake's name in public, though in one or two letters he praised highly certain lyrics, including "The Tiger." Leigh Hunt, who may never have heard of Blake as a poet, printed in his *Examiner* savage attacks on Blake the artist, calling him "an unfortunate lunatic," and lamenting his "bad drawings" and the "deformity and nonsense" of his work. This great, lonely visionary died at the age of seventy, three years after the death of Byron, little known as an artist and almost utterly unknown as a poet.

Yet the history of his mental development connects in many ways with the currents of his age, much more so, for example, than in the case of Landor. His first volume, "Poetical Sketches," is a cento of the new literary tendencies in the late eighteenth century. Influences are there from Thomson's "Seasons," from the Spenserians, from the Elizabethan revival, from Chatterton, from the Norse translations of Gray, from the Gothic current, and from "Ossian." In his later and more mystical work he diverges far from most of these tendencies, but retains unquestionable links of thought with that age which knew him not. His chief tie is through his discipleship to Jacob Boehme. This Austrian shoemaker and visionary, a belated survival of the medieval mystics, left his trail across most of the German *Romantiker*, his influence being clearly traceable in Novalis, in Tieck, in Brentano, and in a minor romantic philosopher Baader, who devoted years to the study and elucidation of his writings. Blake resembled Boehme, and in part at least imitated him, in general mysticism, in many details of poetic symbolism, and

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in childlike simplicity of language. As a result of this common derivation, aided more or less by likenesses of temperament, there is a vague similarity between some of Blake's poetry and Novalis's "Henry of Ofterdingen," for example. Perhaps a common debt to some form of German mysticism accounts also for occasional likenesses between Blake and Wordsworth. Both projected great, rambling epics dealing with

the Mind of Man—

My haunt, and the main region of my song.

In both there is often an attitude toward nature similar to that voiced by the German romantic painter Runge: "We see or should see in every flower the living spirit which the man puts into it, and through that the landscape will come into being, for all animals and flowers are only half there, as soon as the man ceases to furnish the chief part. . . . When thus in all nature we see only our own life, then first, obviously, the right landscape is bound to result." Certain temperamental likenesses can also be traced between Blake and Shelley, on whom no common external force appears to have acted, likenesses in revolutionary spirit, in abstractness, in lyric purity. But the very qualities which mark Blake as in some ways a child of his age are those for which his age ignored him. So, like one of his own mythical characters, he died in the nineteenth century, feeble and solitary, to come to life in the twentieth, a giant in perpetual youth.

Blake to-day is the victim of an enemy from whom he was least in danger in his own day, a fad of overpraise; and regarding some of his more imperfect work both enthusiasm and condemnation have gone wild. None the less, when this passing vogue is over, he will still endure. He was blind to vast tracts of experience, knowledge, inspiration; but what he did see he saw through a glorified, poetic atmosphere. Reading his poems is like being on a mountain top: first, a wild exhilaration, then a sense of giddiness and loneliness, of the absence of the human element, a longing for warm firesides in valleys far below. For this reason, few people, we believe, will ever make him a life companion as they do Burns and Keats



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and the greater Shakespeare. But that wild and transitory exhilaration, however unsatisfying alone, has its place in the needs of a great literature, a place which no other poet has filled so well. Blake stands also for the triumph of poetic faith, a proof that not poverty, nor neglect, nor hostility, nor the shut-in routine of poor laborers in cities can rob a man of artistic vision if he once has it in his soul. In some respects his genius had even more to overcome than that of Burns, who lived among beautiful landscapes while he moved among sidewalks and garrets. But the divine instinct would not down; and if the poetry might at times have been better under more favorable conditions, the struggles of the man toward his ideal would have been less of a triumph for poetry.

Not quite so unpopular as Blake but equally isolated from the literary currents of her age, and more out of sympathy with its spirit was Jane Austen. "Considering how easily the heights of celebrity were stormed at that time, and especially by a woman, it is most remarkable that Jane received no encouragement, and had no literary society, and not one literary correspondent in the whole of her lifetime." That is the testimony of one biographer. According to another, "there is no evidence in the memoirs of her time that any distinguished person ever found himself in her company, her name did not appear on the title pages of any books, she was almost unknown outside of a small provincial circle, and in that circle no one seems to have had any idea that there was anything specially remarkable about her." When it was proposed that she should attempt an historical romance she wrote back: "I am fully sensible that (such a romance) might be much more to the purpose of profit or popularity than such pictures of domestic life in country villages as I deal in. But I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or at any other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. No, I must keep to my own style and go on in my own way; and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other."



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Most of her life was passed, and nearly all her writing done, in the quiet little Hampshire villages of Steventon and Chawton. As Blake worked on calmly in his isle of dreams, mystic and idealist amid the turbid currents of decaying neo-classicism, so she went her untroubled way in her little provincial world, while medieval and Oriental and Wertherish romance raged unheeded without. Being a great reader, she caught through books many glimpses of the changes in contemporary life; but her immediate environment was a little unprogressive back eddy of thought, and she found therein something more congenial than the wild rush of the new.

Though the French Revolution had turned so many other eyes on the condition of the poor, Miss Austen ignores them with gentle ladylike conservativeness. All her heroes and heroines are from the respectable middle class. While Napoleon was ruminating an invasion of England from Boulogne, she was poking fun at Ann Radcliffe in "Northanger Abbey." The *Weltschmerz* of her great French contemporary George Sand would probably have made her open mild eyes of wonder if she had lived to read it. Why should one be so unhappy in a world where there were always pleasant dances to go to, and foolish people to laugh at, and pretty dresses, and jewelry—and husbands—and other objects of *virtu*, in the acquirement of which one could show one's ingenuity, and in the selection of which one could show one's taste? Hers was in many ways an Augustan type of mind, femininely Augustan; and in that gentle, polished, yet trenchant face we seem

to feel

The Ruffle's Flutter and the Flash of Steel.

Miss Austen's favorite poet was Crabbe; and although he was a popular writer and she an unpopular one, in some ways he also was an isolated figure. After his wife's death in 1813 he became acquainted with various literary men, including Rogers, and in 1822 he visited Scott, with whom he had been for years in friendly correspondence. But up to his sixtieth year, during all his best creative period, he had been a lonely figure, utterly out of personal contact with the great writers of the time. How far this affected

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his style we cannot know; his natural limitations were very marked; he had been fifteen years old when Wordsworth was born and had formed his taste in a bygone age. Yet the best realistic work of the period, that of Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, and Crabbe, was produced in literary isolation; and the most realistic of Wordsworth's poetry was the outcome of his most solitary days. Before 1820 the tendency of the literary groups was away from downright contemporary realism. This insulated and uneventful existence no doubt encouraged, though it obviously could not wholly have caused, the fatal lack of versatility in Crabbe, for whom there was only one metre that he could handle, only one social class, and only one mood. The relation of his complete poems to his first triumph, "The Village," is the relation of an elongated telescope to a telescope shut together; the complete works are longer, but contain no poetical appeal that was not at first in the early poem. It is true that with advancing years "the crab-apple softened"; but it is a question if this increasing mildness did not weaken a poet whose stern veracity was his only stock in trade.

How far Crabbe at times tried other literary veins we do not know. During his twenty-year silence he wrote much which the unfavorable comment of friends led him to destroy. Whether the consumed manuscripts were inferior Parish Registers or abortive ballads and Gothic romances, his friends have neglected to state. "Sir Eustace Grey," written somewhere during this interval, in metre, wildness, and love of the morbid differs noticeably from the earlier and later poems, though this also can be considered as a realistic scene in a madhouse.

Byron bracketed Crabbe with Rogers and Campbell as the three men who had remained true to the Pope gospel; and in his last years the aged clergyman visited his fellow spirits occasionally, but their intercourse, never very frequent, began too late to account in any way for common elements in their verse. Moreover, their likenesses were rather in details than in spirit; Rogers's world of elegant *bric-a-brac* was far enough from the harsh materials of which "The Borough" was compounded. Perhaps the cordial welcome which Crabbe received from his public could be explained by his unlikeness

to all contemporary poets; in their romantic feast he was the pinch of salt which, unpalatable in itself, made the whole mixture palatable.

We prefer to think of Burns as lying on the border of our field; yet much of his best poetry, including "Tam O'Shanter" and "The Jolly Beggars," was written after 1790; and a word must be granted him. Like Crabbe he was a popular but isolated figure; unlike Crabbe he belonged to no great literary tradition, but was the giant of a puny race, following paths blazed by almost forgotten poets. The trail of his imitators is even more obscure than the trail of his predecessors. Though his lyrics marked the sunrise of a great lyrical period, his songs have little in common with those of his chief followers except the pure singing quality. The song poetry of Shelley, Wordsworth, Scott, Blake, and even Moore deals only incidentally with

Praise of love or wine,

which were the chief themes of Burns, as they had been those of the Elizabethans. Unlike the learned authors of his time, he had few theories about either literature or politics; and those which he had were borrowed and often bad. If he helped blaze the way of reform, it was not because he bore the torch of new traditions, but partly because poverty and the green fields had insulated him from old traditions that were decadent, partly because the new enthusiasm in the air made his public give the encouragement which would not have come twenty years before.

His work is imperfect enough often. There were callous spots in his brain as there were in his hands, and produced by similar causes. But though one finds imperfect taste in him often enough, one almost never finds the perverted taste, the *doctrinaire* wrongheadedness, which wrecked so much in the pages of Wordsworth and Blake, Southey and Byron. There is a wholesome sanity about this product of the furrow and the meadow, a healthy good sense, which is not identical with culture yet goes far toward taking the place of it. He may often disappoint, but he never bores or antagonizes. And



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when he is at his best, he leads us, not among the pupils of Rousseau, nor to

Pope or Steele  
Or Beattie's wark,

but back to the golden age among the fields of Saturn.

There remain those great writers who have already been discussed at length, Scott and Byron, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Keats and Shelley, with perhaps Hogg and Campbell and Moore for those who like them. Are these men to remain indefinitely where the late nineteenth century placed them, and if so, what part of their work will best endure? On Byron the Nemesis which follows popularity has laid a heavy hand; his warmest admirers now are foreigners; and admiration for him varies inversely as the power to understand the language in which he wrote. The beauty cult which has been derived from Keats has run into decadent extremes and produced a reaction; but that reaction has not yet lowered our estimate for the author of "Hyperion" himself. Toward Wordsworth there is rapt adoration in some quarters and aggressive hostility in others, even as there was in his own day.

The late nineteenth century, after the enthusiasm about Tennyson's "Idylls" had subsided, laid undue emphasis on the short lyric as compared with other types of poetry, and winnowed with the greatest care the literature which it loved. The verdict of its anthologies on what was good or bad in the song poetry of the romantic period may be accepted as approximately final. The longer poems offer a more troublesome problem. The early nineteenth century wrote them hastily in an age which was careless about the technique of long poems; the critics of 1900 judged them blindly in an age which felt only imperfectly the peculiar charm of long poems. Now the twentieth century halts before these inspired but inchoate rhapsodies, puzzled and confused, feeling that they contain much which we would not willingly let die, yet contain it in a form which we would not have chosen. "Mazeppa" and "The Prelude," "The Revolt of Islam" and "Endymion," Blake's "Vala" and Southey's "Thalaba," how gladly would we throw them away if we could find all their beauty and suggestion in more condensed

form elsewhere; how certain we are that this is not the case! If some future writer should give us their inspiration fused and purified, made lucid and condensed, would they not automatically drop out of literature as the flintlock has dropped out of our arsenals? But until that day comes there will be men who will read them for something which cannot be found elsewhere. A long poem is like a large country. The extent of its territory enables one to ramble farther and farther from the frontiers of Philistinism, until he comes at last into peaceful midland regions where anxiety is forgotten and the language of sordid borderlands is a tongue unknown. For the sake of that atmosphere one might forget some faults.

About Wordsworth there is something which reminds one of science. His face in his old age came to look like geological strata. His poems, like the rock-ribbed hills, grow picturesque and attractive only when they have been denuded by torrents of criticism. In a deeper way, however, his attitude toward life approximated that of the scientist; and this accounts for many of the virtues and the faults in his poetry. A great chemist or physicist, in his eager search for some new truth, may grow at once inspired and unsocial. The life of Wordsworth was a search for abstract truth; but he loved that abstract ideal more than he did men. He became at the same time an inspired experimenter in the field of vision, and a harsh, tactless, antagonizing fellow mortal. He made his life a great experiment in the attempt to reconcile poetry and moral philosophy; he made his poems a record of his laboratory researches; and the hardness and bareness of a scientific report is in many of them, yet the essence of truth is there too. It was probably this quality which attracted John Stuart Mill to his poems, yet made Mill believe that they were best adapted for unpoetical minds.

Keats, on the contrary, is *par excellence* the poet of art. The attitude of the scientist toward truth is to him incomprehensible.

Beauty is truth, truth beauty; that is all  
We know on earth, and all we need to know.

As an artist he had far greater power of improvement than Wordsworth in technique and form. He grasped a simpler problem, and,



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had he lived, would have given it far more perfect expression. Because he loved men and Grecian urns better than abstract principles, he was a more lovable man and a more poetical poet than the sage of Rydal; yet for that very reason he is a less powerful figure in the mental history of his country. His poetry was good, but his imitators have too often been bad; and he may yet come, like Pope, to be unjustly depreciated because of the tradition that he founded. None the less we believe that the ages will finally pronounce him potentially, though not in actual performance, the greatest poet of his day, the one ever improving artist of his time who out of errors, follies, and morbidities trodden under foot was building a St. Augustine's ladder to the stars.

Keats, with a keen and critical mind, chose to live in the world of emotions. Shelley, with a remarkably poetic temperament and an incoherent intellect, vainly attempted to live in the world of reason. His philosophy is a fog, his moral code a mirage, dim vapors from the Godwinian fen wrapped in sunset glory from the radiance of his emotional life. It is as the singer of poetic moods that he will endure. His intellect was morbid and half-mad where that of Keats was healthy and keen; but his moods were rich and splendid, whether wholesome and happy or melancholy and diseased. In no other writer of his time is the music of poetic emotion so free from jarring discords, even where it says nothing and gets nowhere.

Byron, if he endures, must endure as the poet of energy,—intellectual energy in observation, emotional energy in passion. He has no other valid claim. Despite occasional magnificent passages, he has neither the ear nor the conscience of an artist. He was not a noble man, and all attempts to whitewash him are doomed to failure. If we are to admire him at all we must admire him as we do the volcano and the panther, a mad, destructive force that is inimical to peace, beauty, and morality, but that awes through its wild outpouring of power; or in satire we must consider him as an intellectual conflagration at once destroying and cleansing a plague-stricken London. Mazeppa's horse foams through the torrent; the thunder rattles among the Alps; Lucifer defies the Almighty; the forests of a dying world blaze through the gathering blackness, and



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the mocker of "Don Juan" exclaims in a tone not that of the Psalmist, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" One might compare Byron to Blake's tiger, and exclaim, half in jest, half in bitter earnest,

Did He who made Charles Lamb make thee?

Only the experience of modern hunters has shown that the tiger is often a bluffing coward; and one wonders if under the fury and thunder of Byron there was not as much weakness as power. The continent of Europe still believes in him; but the continent until recently believed in "Ossian."

Though the poems of Scott do not reach the highest level, we have already recorded our faith in their permanence. Still more are we certain that the Waverley novels will endure. Careless construction, bungling sentences, sins of inaccuracy against history and human nature—all these may be there; but behind them one finds so much that is genuinely human or brilliantly picturesque, the delight in a good story, the sense of riches infinite. After all, has not imagination in our own day been bound down too strictly on the Procrustes bed of accuracy, and is it not good to see her in unspoiled vitality on her native heather?

Aside from the survival of individual poets and poems, how much of the romantic generation itself is going to survive, of its thought, of its attitude toward life? To our scientific, systematized age much of that solitary, introspective dreaming seems remote enough; and many of those early theories are considered as exploded. Yet before hasty generalizations are made, two facts must be remembered. By the law of action and reaction we have rebounded from the early nineteenth-century point of view, and tend to hold certain aspects of it more visionary than they may seem to our grandchildren. The precise combination represented by the "romantic generation" will never come back, but many of its elements will recur in new disguises; and movements, like people, however they may differ from their grandparents, will develop unexpected points of sympathy with the dead. Even while we are writing, the triumphs of machinery and system may be proving that machinery and system

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have no right to triumph; and in the age of submarines and iron order the mysticism of Blake may prove a rock of refuge in a weary land.

Equally important is another consideration that is too often overlooked; namely, that many theories of the past have a deep emotional truth under a thin veil of literal inaccuracy. For instance, the romantic generation showed a tendency to deify childhood. The schools and psychological laboratories of the twentieth century retort that children are little animals; that instead of trailing clouds of splendor from God they live to eat and squabble. True enough—of the children known to those schools and laboratories. But Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, and Lamb, when they wrote of children, were thinking of themselves. Their statements were true as descriptions of the infant poet, however inaccurately expanded to include infant financiers. The history of a poet's life from cradle to grave is a history of gradual compromises between a poetic spirit and a prosaic world, a gradual lowering of his thought in the locks of speech that it may enter the world's mental canals at sea-level. If he turns back to the days when there was no leveling because no communication, when he looked into other children's faces and did not know their minds different from his own—is he not developing a very legitimate form of poetic truth? The letters and journals of literary men, examined with the most scientific accuracy, *do* indicate a poetical and charming mental world in childhood; and what these writers painted was a beautiful truth, only with a wrong label stuck in the corner. A similar rightness of emotional feeling, however obscured by superficial fallacies, lay underneath the love of retirement, of individualism, of subjective thought. Our own age has gone to the opposite extreme, and has produced—German *Kultur*. By their fruits ye shall know them.

The early nineteenth century was, let it be granted, an intoxicated, erratic, faulty age. But it was intoxicated with noble thoughts, it erred in the pursuit of high ideals, and its faults will not hide from posterity the greatness of its virtues. It survived the criticism of its own day; it has survived the world-racking changes of more recent days; and it will continue to endure. At the present time among

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many of our young poets there is a seeming reaction against the great writers of that period, but this reaction is a wholesome sign for both the living and the dead. It is not at bottom an attempt to depreciate bygone masters, but an attempt to check a slavish tradition derived from them. They also warred against the Pope imitators, but Pope himself they did not kill; and a greater than Pope is here.



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